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Comics INTERNATIONAL

Issue 47 October 1994 | The Comics Industry Monthly | 72 pages 50p / $1.25

Ex-editorial head of Marvel and Valiant shuts down

Shooter's Defiant line ceases publication

AFTER several weeks of rumours about the company's financial stability, it has now been confirmed that Defiant has ceased trading.

On Wednesday, August 31st, the entire staff of Defiant publishers Enlightened Entertainment had their employment terminated and publication of all titles was "ceased indefinitely".

Company president Jim Shooter, previously editor-in-chief of Marvel and creative head of Valiant, had only one year earlier announced publicly that with his new venture, Defiant, he would have a totally free hand and that financial backers had signed a non-interference agreement. But with the refinancing discussions held in early August having failed, it is understood that the overall poor sales performance of the company's line has led to this drastic move.

Defiant's final issues are its September releases, which include **Warriors of Plasm #13, Dogs of War #5** and, ironically, the **Defiant: Inside the Tower** promotional video.

***Right:** Alex Ross's celebratory recreation of the cover to Marvel's 1963 **X-Men #1**. This acts as an epitaph to a 31 year history about to be rewritten in the December shipping **X-Men: Alpha** #1 ($3.95) which features the death of Professor Xavier prior to his ever having united the mutant-powered team.*

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A Quality Communications magazine

NEWS · AMERICA ·

Dark Horse's winter big guns

MAINTAINING their summer momentum, Dark Horse has released plans for a wave of titles scheduled for a winter launch, including the company's first CD-ROM technology comicbook.

Return to Sin City

Frank Miller's award-winning series returns with a new five-issue mini, **Sin City: The Big Fat Kill.** This third **Sin City** story takes place in the Old Town, focusing on the "working women's" role in the running of the area and how they deal with Mob attempts to take over their lucrative prostitution business.

Issue one ships on November 15th and retails for $2.95.

Still on Miller, Dark Horse is releasing new signed and numbered limited edition hardcovers of his 1989 **Hard Boiled** and **Give Me Liberty** series. **Hard Boiled** features 16 pages of previously unseen material by artist Geof Darrow, and ships on February 7th, 1995 with a $99.95 cover price.

The cloth covered **Give Me Liberty**, which also includes previously unpublished artwork and character development by Dave Gibbons, ships on January 24th and retails for $114.94.

It is recommended that firm orders are placed with suppliers for these books, as their high cover prices will inhibit overstocking and could lead to a short supply.

A compilation of **James Bond: Serpent's Tooth,** as well as manga titles **Caravan Kidd Christmas Special** and **Apleseed Databooks 1 & 2** are also set for December.

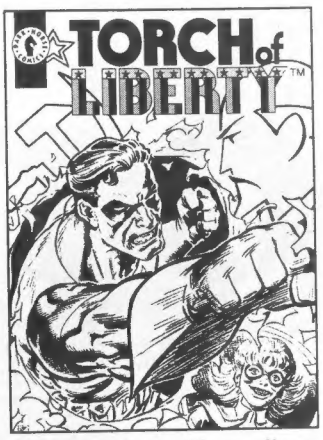
Byrne Special

Despite the cancellation of his **Danger Unlimited** mini-series, John Byrne is producing a **Torch of Liberty Special** to continue the World War II story which began as a back-up strip in **Danger Unlimited.**

Again drawn by Kieron **(Lobo)** Dwyer, this $2.50 32 page January 3 shipping one-shot moves forward in time to examine the Torch of Liberty's escapades during the communist-obsessed 1950s and his battle with Lenin's ghost.

Star Wars sequel

Tom Veitch, Dark Horse's regular Star Wars writer, has collaborated with Cam Kennedy for a follow up to the immensely successful 1990 series **Star Wars: Dark Empire.**



The new six-issue title is a direct continuation as **Dark Empire II** follows Luke Skywalker's attempts to rebuild the Jedi Knights against the dark forces appearing in the galaxy and against a threat more hazardous than the Death Star.

Trade paperbacks of **Dark Empire, Tales of the Jedi** and **Classic Star Wars Vol 1** join this new title, plus the continuing **Dark Lords of the Sith** and **Classic Stars Wars: A New Hope 1 & 2** for December shipping.

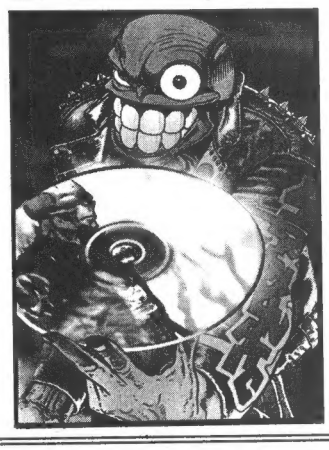
The monthly **Dark Empire II** is priced $2.95 and features Dave Dorman cover paintings.

Dorman also provides covers for a new Indiana Jones series, this time set in 1947. It tells of Indy's search for the Key of Solomon, pursued by Soviet bureaucrats and Nazis intent on reforming the Third Reich.

Indiana Jones and the Iron Phoenix is written by Lee Marrs and drawn by Leo Durañona. Priced $2.50, the 4-issue series begins shipping on December 13th.

Digital Mask

This summer's cinema blockbuster **The Mask** is moving into interactive computer games as Dark Horse, Cyber Media and Metrolight Studios collaborate to produce **The Mask: The Origin — Dark Horse Digital #1** on CD-ROM, compatible with Macintosh and PC computers.



The original story and hundreds of illustrations from the first **Mask** series have been converted and enhanced by the Oscar-winning computer effects company, Metrolight Studios.

The CD comic features 256 colours, sound affects and voice-overs but, in keeping with the movie, has been toned down from the original comic's more violent approach to suit a wider audience.

Retailing for $29.95, **The Mask: The Origin — Dark Horse Digital #1** will ship on November 1st.

The Mask also appears in conventional comics format in a festive one-shot by Rick Geary, **The Night Before ChristMask,** on sale in January. It tells of a young boy who dons the mask to help Santa Claus distribute his presents.

Maintaining diversity

Eddie Campbell, who briefly catapulted to mainstream comics as the somewhat misplaced writer on DC/Vertigo's **Hellblazer,** returns to more familiar territory in a new Dark Horse **Eyeball Kid** mini.

The $2.95 **Hermes vs. The Eyeball Kid** is a three-issue series pitting the two characters against each other with the knowledge that one of them has to die. The first issue ships on December 13th.

● **Grendel Tales: Homecoming** continues Matt Wagner's sets of mini-series featuring the band of mystery assassins known as Grendels. The lead story in this new three-issue series is written and drawn by **Grendel: War Child** artist Pat McEown, while Wagner provides the back-up story which will lead into next year's **Batman/Grendel II** crossover.

● The Pander Brothers, who established themselves on Comico's **Grendel** series, have a new seven-issue title launching in December.

XXX: Triple X is set in Amsterdam 2033, and follows the rise to power of Thexoll, a megalomaniac with designs on godhood. Each monthly issue will be 48 pages in black and white with grey tones and will retail for $3.95.

New readers: begin here

Comics International is a monthly industry newspaper devoted to the comics medium. As such, it provides details of forthcoming UK and US comics and related items, together with reviews and commentary on current titles.

Certain products mentioned are not available through regular news agent outlets, but only from the 'direct sale' comics specialist retailers and mail order companies. Details of specialist outlets are advertised throughout the magazine, and a listing of the major specialists in Britain is given in our Retail Index and Mail Order Index sections.

***Shipping dates** mentioned for North American titles are the dates copies leave their printers to be air-freighted to distributors for direct sale outlets approximately one week later. These dates and titles do not relate to on-sale dates or titles for news agent copies.*

The Marvel and DC titles on newstrade distribution are on sale in the UK approximately two to three months after the air-freighted copies can be bought through specialist shops and mail order companies dealing with 'advance imports'. Because of the additional shipping costs incurred, these advance copies are sold at a higher price than the UK cover price.

***American dollar prices** are listed for US titles with most UK comic shops converting at the rate of 80p = $1.*

Most reputable mail order dealers bear a CoBRA seal on their advertisements. For full details concerning advertisers displaying this Mail Order Protection seal, see page 70.

DC's winter launch campaign encompasses all-age diversity

THE LEAD up to Christmas has become an increasingly important time in the direct sale market. But while UK annuals leapfrog ahead of each other to ever-earlier publication dates, DC's main focus for new titles is in its November and December shipping dates.

The highlights include the debut of Paradox Press with **The Big Book of Urban Legends** (see **Comics International #46**) and **La Pacifica**, plus the first *Vertigo Voices* titles: Milligan & Fegredo's **Face** and Morrison & Bond's **Kill Your Boyfriend**.

Licensed titles include the adaptation of the movie **Star Trek: Generations**, featuring the long-awaited meeting of Enterprise captains Kirk and Picard; the first issue of the spin-off from the **Babylon 5** sf TV series and **Animaniacs: A Christmas Special**, taken from the Steven Spielberg-Warner Bros TV cartoon.

On the mainstream superhero front **Extreme Justice** launches out of the ruins of Justice League International, **Showcase '95** is announced as a Super-family tie-in and the sequel to **Batman-Dracula: Red Rain** is scheduled.

Vertigo's **Swamp Thing** reaches its 150th issue with a giant-sized special, a new creative team debuts on **Hellblazer** and new story arcs begin to provide easy jump-on points in **The Invisibles, Books of Magic** and **Black Orchid**.

Spielberg spin-off

AS A prelude to the regular series, **Animaniacs: A Christmas Special** is a November 8th shipping standard format $1.50 title featuring popular US tv cartoon characters Yakko and Wakko (the Warner Brothers) -- and their Warner sister Dot.

The comic features a zany retelling of "'Twas the Night before Christmas", as well as explaining how the characters were first locked away in the Warner Bros studio lot.

Red Rain sequel

A 96 page hardcover graphic novel, **Batman: Bloodstorm** ships on November 15th as Doug Moench and Kelley Jones reunite for the follow-up to Batman's first *Elseworlds* meeting with Dracula in **Red Rain**.

It tells that with Gotham City still not freed from the vampiric threat, the vampiric Batman struggles with his own bloodlust while attempting to defeat the Joker and his gang of blood-sucking followers. John Beatty inks Kelley Jones' pencils in this book which DC describes as containing "ultimate evil ... and ultimate sacrifice".

Extreme League of America

POSSIBLY motivated by the poor sales on the existing JL titles, DC is launching a harder-edged team book, **Extreme Justice**, produced by the former **Justice League of America** creative team of Dan Vado, Rob Campos and Ken Branch.

Captain Atom, Maxima, Blue Beetle, Booster Gold and Amazing Man decide they no longer like being dictated to by the United Nations so they form their own team, with loose affiliations to the UN sanctioned **Justice League Task Force**.

The final frontiers

THE official movie adaptation of **Star Trek: Generations** is being released by DC on November 22nd.

Written by Jan Michael Friedman and drawn by Gordon Purcell and Jerome Moore, the comic adapts the motion-picture meeting of the two Enterprise crews.

Two versions of the 64 page title are being produced, an enhanced $5.95 prestige edition and a standard format $3.95 version.

With the Malibu co-production of **Next Generation** and **Deep Space Nine**, plus the **Next Generation: Shadowheart** mini, plus the November 29 shipping **Star Trek Special #2** ($3.95, 64 pages, new format) and the regular two monthlies, this brings DC's Trek quota up to six titles.

Further strengthening the company's science fiction line is **Babylon 5**, a new continuing DC title based on the Warner Bros TV series set set launch in December.

The first issue is written by TV series creator and head writer J. Michael Straczynski and will tie directly into the first story in the TV series' second season.

With the title structured in four-issue stories, **Ninjak**'s Mark Moretti completes the first serial, writing issues two to four, while Peter David and John Ostrander are scheduled to produce future stories.

Art for the series is provided by Michael (**Huntress**) Netzer and Rob (**Green Arrow**) Leigh and covers will be produced by Michael Kaluta.

The first issue ships on December 6th in DC's new format, priced $1.95.

Vertigo versions

FACE is the first of the new Vertigo Voices titles of creator-owned projects being edited by Vertigo's London-based Art Young.

Face is produced by the team responsible for the critically acclaimed Vertigo series **Enigma**, Peter Milligan and Duncan Fegredo.

The first of three distinctive one-shots, it involves a plastic surgeon who believes that the face is the ultimate canvas for art.

This 64 page one-shot is priced $4.95 and ships on November 29th.

● **Kill Your Boyfriend**, by Grant Morrison and Philip (**Wired World**) Bond, is the second of the Vertigo Voices one-shots.

It is described as "a kaleidoscope look at English weirdness, an over-the-top black comedy of rebellion, teenage romance and consumer values with a heady mix of random violence and dark humour".

Retailing for $4.95 it ships on December 6th.

● While the original series petered out after only 24 issues, **Swamp Thing** reaches 150 with the November 29th shipping issue and celebrates by setting the scene for major changes over coming months.

The double-sized $2.95 issue features a confrontation with both the Parliament of Trees and the Parliament of Stones by regulars Mark Millar and artists Phil Hester and Kim DeMulder.

● EDDIE (**Bacchus**) Campbell takes over as writer on **Hellblazer** with issue 85 for a four-issue stint. and is joined by new regular artist Sean (**Shade**) Phillips as a drastically different John Constantine is lured into the past by the founder of the infamous Hellfire Club, Sir Francis Dashwood.

Hellblazer 85 ships on November 22nd, priced $1.95.

Paradox Mysteries

La Pacifica is a three-book black and white series from Paradox Press in a new 96-page "compact" format. Shipping on November 29, it tells of an innocuous Californian motel that beocmes the site of a madman's killing spree.

The $4.95 series is by screenwriter Joel Rose and director Amos Poe and drawn by Tayyar Ozkan.

● **Brooklyn Dreams** is a four-book Paradox Press series written by **Moonshadow**'s J. Marc DeMatteis with art by Glenn Barr.

Described as "a poignant, reflective tale of one man's life and the dreams that encompassed it", the first 96-page book ships on December 6th and retails for $4.95.

DC in 1995

As **Showcase '94** with its focus on the Batman supporting cast concludes, DC has announced that **Showcase '95** will spotlight Superman's co-stars including *The Guardian, Newsboy Legion, Lois Lane* and *Supergirl*.

Street Fighter, the video game currently being made into a film starring Jean Claude Van Damme and Raul Julia, is to be a new DC title for 1995.

● Barry Kitson, the Norfolk-based artist on **Adventures of Superman** and the recent DC/Marvel **Batman Punisher: Lake of Fire**, is taking over the regular pencilling on **Batman: Shadow of the Bat** and **Azrael** in the new year.

● Kelley Jones, the **Batman** cover artist and penciller on **Red Rain** and **Bloodmatch**, is to to draw the interior pages of **Batman** for a six-issue story arc.

● While **The Demon** is cancelled with issue #58, Garth Ennis and John McCrea are believed to be developing a replacement title.

● The third **Batman/Judge Dredd** team up is now planned for April. The script is by Alan Grant and the painted art is by Glenn Fabry.

Marvel focuses on character development for winter push

TRADITIONALLY, winter is less hectic than summer for American comic book publishers, who have always viewed the sunshine months as peak launch period. Unlike Britain, where publishers schedule new titles for the shorter days of the winter months, believing potential buyers would be less likely to read comics during the summer, because of overseas holidays and outdoor distractions.

But now, after a relatively quiet summer, the major US publishers are following the UK model and are gearing up for a busy winter.

Marvel's mainstream superhero line has just had a quiet summer compared to recent mid-year onslaughts and although the company is not entering winter with quite the range of new books that DC or Dark Horse has lined up, it continues its revitalisation of backbone properties beyond those already affected.

The Hulk, Silver Surfer, Captain America and The X-Men are all to have drastic changes this winter, while next April will bring about the return of some *fantastic* old friends.

Surfer centenary

The Silver Surfer, a cult character who couldn't reach issue 20 in his first run, will celebrate his 100th issue in December with a confrontation with his arch-enemy Mephisto.

Ever since their first meeting, in **Silver Surfer** Vol 1 #3, the Surfer has thwarted Mephisto's plans. But in this 100th issue of the Surfer's current series the master of the dark realm wins his first victory over the former herald of Galactus and the end-product is a drastically weakened Silver Surfer.

Joining writer Ron Marz as regular artist with issue 100 is former **Mister Miracle** penciller Joe Phillips and to celebrate reaching three figures, **Silver Surfer 100** will be available in two versions; the regular newsstand edition and one with an enhanced pixel hologram cover. The November 29 shipping books will retail for $2.25 and $3.95 respectively.

Captain America

Captain America's year-long quest for a replacement ends in December with the final part of the *Fighting Chance* storyline. The ending of the story heralds a new beginning for Captain America, but whether Steve Rogers will be the man under the mask or not is yet to be revealed.

Hulk transformations

Despite increased sales and the arrival of "hot" artist Liam Sharp, **The Incredible Hulk** is to undergo another personality and appearance change in issue 425.

The savage Hulk personality is to return together with the Jekyll & Hyde transformations, as the human Bruce Banner returns to the pages for the first time since issue 376. But we are promised he will harbour a completely different personality to any seen before.

Issue 425 also features the departure of the current art team of Gary Frank and Cam Smith, who are both working on major prestige format projects said to include the much-rumoured **Hulk/Superman** crossover.

Smoothing the transition, Gary Frank and Cam Smith provide the art for the first half of **Hulk** #425, while Liam Sharp and Robin Riggs complete the story.

Over the next couple of months the fates of Betty Banner and the members of the Pantheon are to be revealed. As well as the comic adopting the same dual format (and price) as the X-family titles, author Peter David hints that there will be some unexpected surprises in store.

Select specials

A range of new mini-series is being launched using the Marvel Select format of glossy stock seen recently in the **Marvels** mini-series.

● **Rogue** is a new four-issue series by Howard **(Gambit)** Mackie and Mike **(Flash)** Wieringo exploring the popular character's time before she joined either The X-Men or The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.

The series follows directly from the **Gambit** mini-series and also looks at the relationship between Rogue and Gambit, her long-time suitor.

● Wolverine teams-up with The Punisher and Ghost Rider for the sequel to the 1991 one-shot **Hearts of Darkness**, which, despite suffering on sell-through, was the largest trade ordered prestige format one-shot in the company's history.

Entitled **The Dark Design**, it features the three heroes returning to Christ's Crown to prevent

Mephisto and his son, Blackheart, from destroying the town. The special is written by Howard Mackie, who also produced the first story, and artists Ron **(Ghost Rider)** Garney and Al **(X-Factor)** Milgrom. The 48 page one-shot retails for $5.95 and ships on December 6th.

Ghost Rider and Wolverine also team up in **Ghost Rider** #57 and **Wolverine** #89, both shipping to the UK in November.

● **Gargoyles** is Marvel's latest venture with Disney and is based on the forthcoming animated series.

In the title, readers are introduced to NYPD detective Elisa Maza who discovers the existence of mysterious creatures which protect the city from violence and crime.

The first issue features a cover by Joe Madureira and Jimmy Palmiotti and has interior story and art by

Martin Pasko and Amanda Conner.

The first issue, which features a foil-embossed cover, ships on December he 13th, priced $2.50.

Marvel Press

TO tie-in with the release of the **Rogue** limited series in November, Marvel is releasing two special 11" by 34" press posters featuring the line artwork of Joe Quesada and the painting of Joe Rubinstein.

Being smaller than regular Marvel Press editions, the posters featuring Rogue and Gambit retail for $3.95.

● Marvel Press is also publishing a new Alex Ross poster featuring his painted rendition of the cover from **Fantastic Four** #1 which retails for the regular $4.95.

● Hulk vs Thing bookends, produced by Bowen Designs, are indivudual nine-inch sculptures.

The cold-cast $175.00 ceramic statues will ship during November.

Nightmare mini

Marvel villain and master of the dream world, **Nightmare**, is getting a four issue mini-series in October.

Written by Ann **(Daredevil)** Nocenti, the series tells of Nightmare giving up the mantle of Lord of the Nightmare Dimension and, for the love of a mortal woman, becoming a human being again.

The resulting abdication forces a war in his realm and Nightmare has to reassess his position and decide the fate of the dimension.

The series is illustrated by hot new artist Joe **(Ravage 2099)** Bennett and inked by Mike **(Warriors of Plasm)** Witherby.

The first issue ships on October 11th and retails for $1.95.

X-Men's Zero Hour

At this year's San Diego Comic Convention, Marvel's Skip Dietz was asked to comment on the rumour that Marvel was planning to cancel all of its X-Men titles and replace them with new books.

Dietz replied, to what could have been regarded as spurious talk with a tease, "There are a lot of big rumours and a lot of announcements I would like to make, but Tom DeFalco told me I couldn't. He would like to get **Generation X** out of the way first."

The lead-up to this major event begins in November when Legion, the ultra-powerful son of Charles Xavier, recovers from the coma he was placed in during *The Muir Island Saga* in **X-Factor** #71.

The first signs of the changes take place in the October shipping **X-Factor** #109 with Lilandra's arrival on Earth and Legion's escape from his containment chamber.

His flight alerts X-Factor but they are sidelined by the appearance of Lilandra — Charles Xavier's interstellar girlfriend. Her arrival with news of the possible end of the universe not only allows Legion to evade X-Factor's detection but also to slip back in time.

Legion determines that Eric Magnus Lenshur (Magneto) must die, therefore changing the course of history and ensuring that his father's goals are achieved. But his actions result in a ripple effect which prevents Xavier's formation of mutanmt heroes the X-Men.

The story continues in **Uncanny X-Men** 320-321 and **X-Men** 40-41 as a youthful Charles Xavier gathers a band of young mutants together to prevent the death of Magneto.

This scene-setter for the major shake-up in 1995 also heralds the return of Wolverine to the X-Men.

Scott Lobdell and Fabian Nicieza continue to write both major X-Men books, but are joined by current "hot" writer Mark **(Flash)** Waid for the pivotal **X-Men: Alpha**.

X-Men: Alpha is the December 27th shipping one-shot that creates all the changes. Following the story from **X-Men** #41, it tells of the youthful Charles Xavier dying attempting to save Magneto and in doing so, changing the course of mutant history.

During December, all the X-titles will feature events which tie-in directly to the time-twisting event.

But in January, all the X-books will change and feature various teams in a new world where mutant hatred has boiled over. Many popular heroes are set to become villains, and villains heroes.

The Ghost Who Walks

The Phantom is Marvel's latest mini-series based on King Features Syndicate-owned characters.

It is being published to coincide with the new animated television series due to appear this autumn on US TV.

In the new limited series, Lee Falk's classic jungle hero journeys to Africa's Ruwenzori Mountains to prevent a corporate takeover that threatens his existence.

The Phantom is written by Dave DeVries with art by Glen Lumsden and the first issue ships on December 20th, priced $2.95.

Ultra X-Men '95

Fleer releases a new X-Men trading card series in December.

Ultra X-Men '95 is a 150 card set shipping in December using six-colour printing and featuring artwork from Glenn **(Hellblazer)** Fabry, Ray Lago, Luis Royo, John Romita, Bob Larkin (see below), Nelson and the Hildebrandt Brothers.

The series also includes a ten-card chromium subset with art by fantasy artists Julie Bell and Boris Vallejo, a ten-card *Suspended Animation* set of foil-stamped plastic cards by Gary Ciccarelli and a nine-card *Power Blast* etched foil sub-set by David DeVries.

IN BRIEF

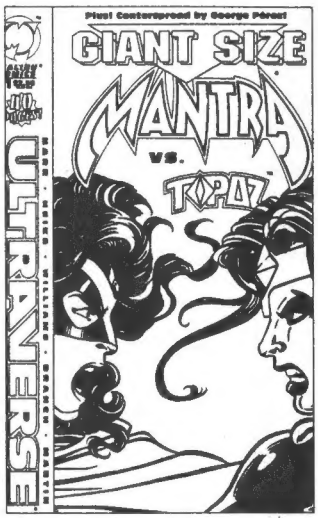
Bongo's 2nd wave

AS the mini-series **Radioactive Man** and **Itchy and Scratchy** reach their sixth issue conclusions, Bongo Comics has two new series to replace them.

Krusty the Klown is due out in December and **The Secret Files of Lisa Simpson** is planned for February or March.

New designs

MALIBU is to make major changes to the cover designs of its Ultraverse line of titles.



The new design will be used throughout all the Ultraverse titles plus annuals and giant-size issues.

The first of the new designs will appear on the October shipping $2.95 64 page **Prime Annual** #1 which features a cover painting by top fantasy artist Boris Vallejo.

Dragonmoon rising

CHRIS Claremont, Beth Fleisher and illustrator John Bolton have combined to produce **Dragon Moon**, an all-new fantasy novel released by Bantam Spectra.

It tells of a professional comic book writer who is transformed into a mythical Celtic warrior, courtesy of a medieval fantasy society, only to find herself facing real time-displaced warriors from a mythical past. The book retails for $14.95.

Return to Oz

CALIBER Press is to publish an ongoing series entitled **Oz**, based on the L. Frank Baum series of books.

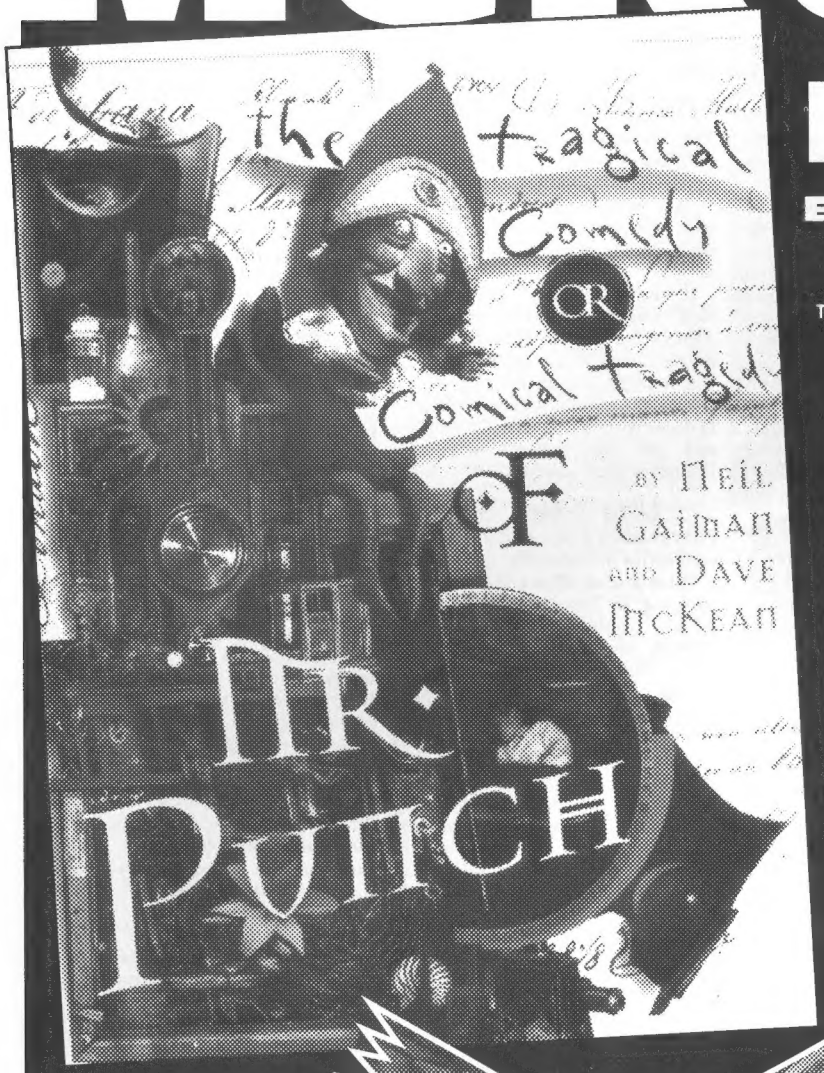
Caliber's publisher Gary Reed said "This version will be slightly twisted and show the darker side of the magical world of Oz."

He continued, "The works of Baum go far beyond what was portrayed in either movie version and we'll be covering many of those events with this series."

The initial issues will be written by Ralph Griffiths and Stuart Kerr and will be drawn by comics veteren Bill Bryan.

Reed hopes that the series will be published on a monthly schedule, but is awaiting trade reaction to number one before making any firm commitment.

Gaiman McKean



MR PUNCH

EXCLUSIVE HARDCOVER

The Forbidden Planet group is proud to announce that a hardcover edition of this major work will be available exclusively through its 13 stores from Friday October 7th. The print run is limited to only 807 copies, so we advise you to reserve your copy now. The softcover edition will be published on 27th October.

SIGNINGS

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IN BRIEF

Hardcase history

FROM the Malibu Ultraverse line comes a new title which looks at the full story of Hardcase's life before the current adventures in his own comic title.

The Squad: A Hardcase Mini-Series, by James Hudnall, Scott Benefiel and Gary Rodriguez, is a four-issue title exploring the grim events that led up to **Hardcase #1**.

It launches in December, retailing for $2.25.

Quesada self-publishes

IN the high-risk area of creators turned self-publishers, Event Comics is a new comics company being set up by the artists Joe **(Ninjak)** Quesada and Jimmy **(Ghost Rider)** Palmiotti together with Californian art gallery owner and publisher Laurie Braddock.

Event's first title is **Ash**, a superhero who just happens to be a fireman in his spare time.

The first issue appears in December and retails for $2.95.

Event's second title will be **The Kid Death and Fluffy After Christmas Special** and is scheduled for a February release. It will be written by Quesada and drawn by Rick **(Beavis & Butt-Head)** Parker.

This will be followed by a series of **Kid Death and Fluffy** specials with a variety of artists.

Attack of the Killer Bs

RENOWNED horror film director/producer Roger Corman has announced the formation of a new comics publishing company in association with Concorde-New Horizons Corporation, *Roger Corman's Cosmic Comics*.

Taking a lead from the cinema, two of the company's first comic books will be based on Corman films. The Rick Moranis musical *The Little Shop of Horrors* becomes the comic **Welcome to the Little Shop of Horrors** while *The Wasp Woman* becomes a comic with the same title.

But the first Cosmic Comics release will be **Death Race 2020**, a follow-up to Corman's 1976 cult film *Death Race 2000*, which starred David Carradine.

Creative teams have yet to be announced, but Corman has said he intends to continue his movie tradition of unearthing new talent to complement the many industry veterans that he plans to work with.

Death Race 2020 is scheduled to appear in March, 1995.

Year of the Visitor

FOLLOWING its redesigned covers, Valiant is now strenthening its line further as **X-O Manowar** switches to a weekly schedule during November to present a four-issue story that will change the entire direction of the series.

The Wolfbridge Affair serial, written by Jorge González, drawn by Rik Levins and inked by Randy Elliott, will all feature Jeff **(Solitaire)** Johnson covers and retail for $2.25.

To preview the start of a new Valiant title, **The Visitor**, the company is releasing the two-issue **Visitor vs. The Valiant Universe** by Kevin VanHook and Britain's Bryan Hitch.

The two issues ship fortnightly during November and retail for $2.95 each.

Valiant is also recolouring and reworking the original stories of the Western Publishing characters it has licensed to present a line of ongoing $2.50 comics starring Magnus, Solar and Turok.

Starlin's Breed II

BREED II: The Book of Revelation is Jim Starlin's follow-up to his successful **'Breed** mini-series, launched earlier this year under Malibu's Bravura imprint.

The six-issue series follows Raymond Stoner, the 'Breed, in a further test against his demonic relatives and features his discovery that someone behind the scenes has a plan in store for his supernatural powers. The first 40-page issue of **Breed II** will retail for $2.95.

Vampy revisited

HARRIS is to begin reprinting colour versions of the classic 1960s Warren published **Vampirella** black and white stories by top Spanish artist Jose (Pepe) Gonzales in a bi-monthly title proposed for 1995.

Dorkin at Disney

COURTESY of **Deadline** publishing his *Milk & Cheese*, Evan Dorkin's popularity in the UK has become greater than in his native America.

But now, in addition to producing **Instant Piano** for Dark Horse, Dorkin has created a slightly inept superhero - Kid Blastoff - who is set to debut in the January 1995 issue of **Disney Adventures**.

Heidi MacDonald, Disney senior comics editor, admits having been a fan of Dorkin's since his **Pirate Corp$** began for Eternity in 1987.

Kid Blastoff in "Attack of the Bomb Squad" will be serialised across the January to March issues of **Disney Adventures**.

It worked for Image...

THE 37th issue of the comic fan magazine **Wizard** shipped with two different covers, although no announcements to the trade had been made.

One copy in every ten printed a special Joe Quesada cover instead of the regular one by Rob Liefeld.

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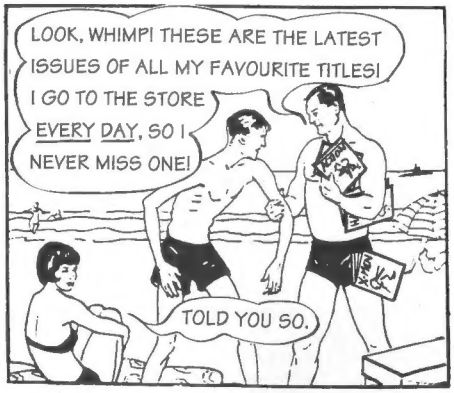

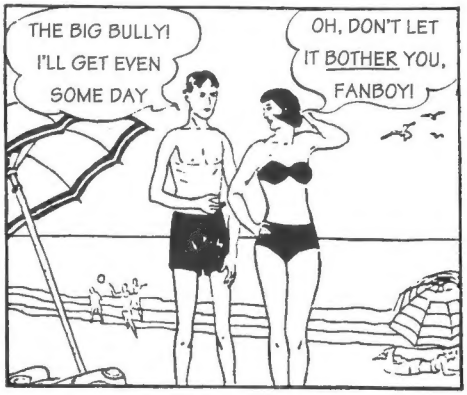

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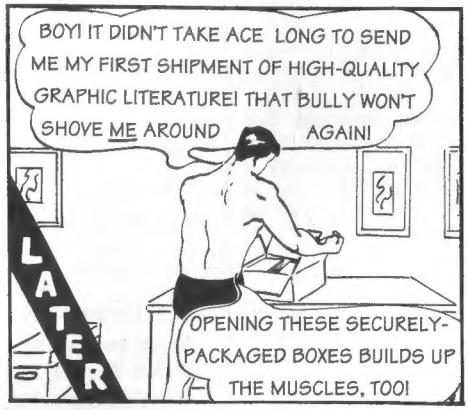
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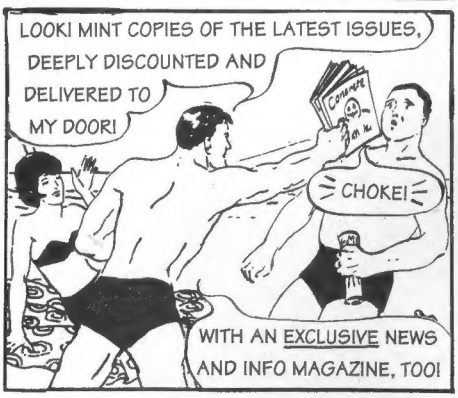
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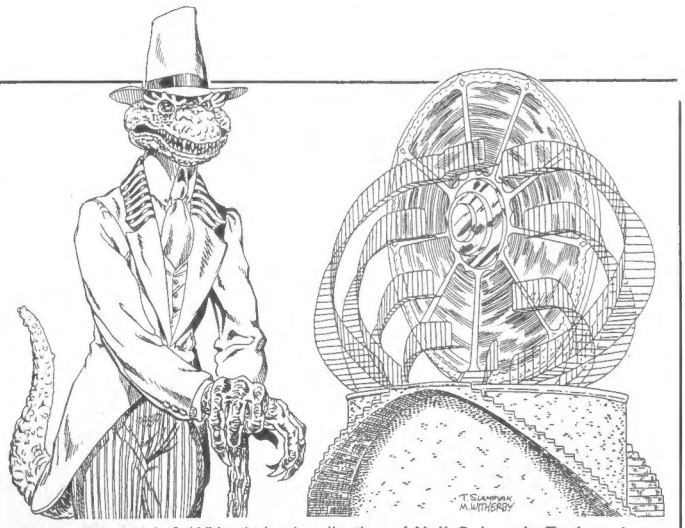


*Above: Slampyak & Witherby's visualisation of **Neil Gaiman's Technophage**. Below right: for **Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe**, a sketch of Arena by Freas.*

Visualising Tekno Comix

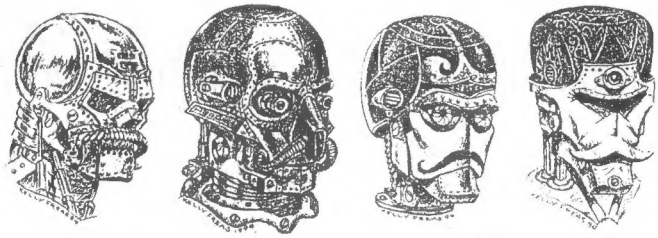
SCIENCE fiction comic publishers Tekno Comix unveils the first two of its new line of comics in December.

● **Leonard Nimoy's The Primortals**, which is written by Kate **(Omaha the Cat Dancer)** Worley, follows the story of Earth's first contact with extra-terrestrials and how the meeting effects Earth.

The series will be drawn by Scot **(Swamp Thing)** Eaton and Mike **(Batman)** Barreiro.

● **Neil Gaiman's Mr Hero: The Newmatic Man** is the story of a mechanical man, invented during the Victorian era, who is the last remaining obstacle in the way of the modern day villain, Technophage.

The series will be written by Jim Vance and drawn by Ted Slampyak and veteran inker Bob McLeod.



Above: *Frank Kelly Freas's character sketches for Neil Gaiman's **Mr Hero — The Newmatic Man**. Above are four of the character sketches Freas produced before the final design was approved. Note how, to provide a Victorian feel to the robot, the moustache was a constant feature in Mr Hero's development.*
Below: *Mickey Spillane and Majel Barrett-Roddenberry announced their Tekno Comix projects at this year's San Diego Comic Convention. Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry's **Lost Universe** will be released in December, while Mickey (Mike Hammer) Spillane's **Mike Danger** is proposed for a February launch.*

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MAJOR DIGRESSIONS

A shadow of a good movie

Peter David, writer of comics, paperbacks, film scripts and stuff, contributes a weekly column, "But I Digress" to US trade paper ***The Comic Buyer's Guide****. In addition to appearing monthly in* ***Comics International****, his columns have been compiled by Krause Publications into a 258 page paperback, now available in all good comic shops.*

LOOK! Up in the sky! It's a grim, gritty metropolitan environment, where skyscrapers are set against a stormy sky and no amount of imminent rain can wash away the grime and the crime.

Hold on! The movie camera is careening forward, vaulting over the building tops, zipping in, swooping out, all at dizzying speed, eventually coming to rest on a mysterious man in black whose head whips around as he stares malevolently and significantly into the camera.

This can only mean one thing:

We're watching a superhero movie.

It ain't ***The Crow***. No rock and roll music.

It ain't *Batman*, *Batman Returns* or *Batman Forever*. (But not Michael Keaton forever. Then, again, that writing was on the wall as soon as Tim Burton went away. You gotta love it. A bunch of years ago I was on a panel at a convention and almost got crucified when I supported the then scandalous choice of *Mr. Mom* Keaton and *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* Burton as star and director of *Batman*. And now fans are going around muttering, "I dunno... without Keaton or Burton, I dunno..." But I digress...)

Who knows what film lurks?

The Shadow does.

My first exposure to The Shadow as a character — as I suspect was the case with many folks — was not through the old pulp stories, but rather the old radio show. The two incarnations developed almost simultaneously (both under the aegis of publishing company Street & Smith) and yet varied greatly.

In the former, The Shadow (a.k.a. Kent Allard, a.k.a. Lamont Cranston) was an avenger against crime, most of whose adventures were written by pulp writer Walter Gibson as Maxwell Grant. He was depicted with an enveloping cape, a slouch hat, a *schmata* obscuring the low half of his face, a beak nose that could open cans of tuna fish, and — more often than not — clutching in each hand a forty-five (and I don't mean a record). He had a network of aides, a girlfriend named Margo Lane, and he hid in shadows a good deal, as he chased down criminals (thus giving new meaning to the phrase "Don't quit your day job").

In the latter, Lamont Cranston (no Kent Allard) had the power (learned in the Orient) to cloud men's minds. He could have had a hell of a career in politics or show business, but instead he, too, battled crime, using this power to render himself literally invisible (as opposed to those pulps, where he was virtually invisible).

Shadows? Don't make him laugh (please). His power was so overwhelming that he could be standing in the middle of the Sahara at high noon and you still couldn't find him. His fearsome chortle would ride across the airwaves, chilling the kids at home and striking fear in the hearts of men (wherein evil lurked, as The Shadow knew). There was no network of aides, as I recall, save for the occasional appearance of Moe "Shrevie" Shrevnitz and, of course, Margo Lane, described as "his friend and companion." (Uh... huh.)

The radio series was written by a variety of freelancers, most notably Alfred Bester. As for the actors, the most renowned vocal pairing in the run of the series was Orson Welles (pre-Martians) as Cranston and Agnes Moorehead (bewitching even then) as Margo Lane, who got into trouble so frequently that one suspected she had to be related to Lois. That sort of accident-prone tendency has *got* to be genetic. Shrevie was voiced by Alan Reed, most notable in later years for his animated performance as Fred Flintstone.

In 1940, Columbia produced a 15-episode serial starring Victor Jory as Lamont Cranston, wealthy criminologist who donned black duds and became The Shadow to fight the mysterious Black Tiger. Other than that, The Shadow hasn't received much movie exposure.

Until this year, when we've been handed the most high-tech, high-budget, big star treatment that The Shadow has ever seen. It's part of the ongoing 1994 genre heaven for comics fans that began with *The Crow*, continued to *Flintstones*, and carried on through to *The Mask*.

The Shadow gives us, this time, Alec Baldwin as Lamont Cranston. This Shadow is an amalgam of both radio and pulp. Baldwin sports the traditional black ensemble, complete with a prosthetic nose when he's in full regalia (there's only one shot of him with the nose *sans* bandanna; mercifully it's brief, since it looks ludicrous without the mask), and

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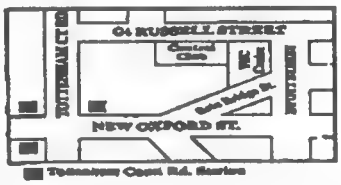

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he uses his .45s when he's in a pinch.

However, he's made even more formidable, since he's got the radio version's mind-clouding ability. This enables him, via computer-aided enhancement, to dart in and out of visibility while mopping the floor with bad guys.

(Unfortunately, it's played inconsistently. For example, at one point he's given away, when, standing in knee-deep water, villainous henchman Tim Curry spots water surging around the unseen Shadow's legs. That's acceptable, if one is battling the Invisible Man, whose body is still theoretically bound by such physical traces as footprints. But The Shadow's using hypnotism. If he can order a mind to ignore his entire bodily presence, it should be a cakewalk to command, "You cannot see me or any sign of me." Presto. Swirling water is no more visible than The Shadow himself.)

The script even expands Cranston's mental techniques, granting him telepathic abilities (which had been present in earlier radio episodes but were eventually dropped) and hypnotic powers: powers so formidable that he's even able to make his police commissioner uncle, Wainright (Jonathan Winters, wasted in a small, serious, role), decide not to pursue The Shadow for his reported transgressions. (Indeed, one watches the scene and waits for the shadow-cloaked Cranston to intone "These aren't the droids you're looking for...".)

Even when he's nattily sporting a tux as Cranston, Baldwin does a superb job of invoking the image, the intensity of the silhouetted saviour of New York City. Mostly it's through the blazing fury in his eyes. The only actor right now who matches Baldwin for intense glowering is Sean Connery, and — unlike *The Hunt for Red October* — Connery is not around to compete this time.

And Baldwin/Cranston/The Shadow certainly has a lot to glower at in this film.

David's Koepp's script gives us Shiwan Khan (John Lone as a descendent of Ghengis Khan), whose ancestor conquered half the known world. Shiwan, undaunted by the fact that the world's a lot more known, and a lot bigger, resolves "to finish the job."

Certainly, a master hypnotist could devise many ingenious ways to accomplish this aim. But Khan is the type of guy who walks Manhattan streets wearing Mongol armour, so apparently he's not into subtlety — or common sense.

His plan is twofold: blow New York City to kingdom come (which, if one rules the world by winning a popularity contest, will get him major points in many places outside of New York) and enlist the aid of The Shadow himself.

Yes, that's right, he wants Cranston to help him. And here is the major wrinkle that Koepp has added to the Shadow mythos. Rather than simply being a crime-fighting persona, The Shadow comes across as a barely-controlled, even feared, evil side of Cranston whom he lets out — almost reluctantly — to nail the bad guys.

Jekyll-and-Hyde like, Cranston's features morph into those of The Shadow's whenever his dark side is accessed. It's a nice way to explain the variant features; Baldwin's rugged handsomeness doesn't jibe with the formidable masked appearance. The thought that Cranston has to glue on a rubber nose before swinging into action is even more ridiculous than realizing that Keaton's Batman has to stop and put black make-up rings around his eyes before leaping into the Batmobile. This psychological explanation, while a tad convenient, nonetheless provides story potential.

For the movie version, Cranston is a tortured soul. When we first encounter him (in a sequence that inexplicably confused some reviewers), Cranston is a dispirited, brutal opium lord in the Orient. He is shanghaied (so to speak) and brought to mysterious monks, who promise that they will redeem him (not unlike Green Shield Stamps). They do so by teaching him to focus and control his dark, shadowy side.

(Although they never challenge him to snatch the pebble from someone's hand, there is an extended bit with a flying knife that has a grimacing, snarling face on the handle. It's supposed to look fearsome, I presume, but it comes across as silly. The weapon is intended to have some sort of significance, but I was never clear on precisely what that might be. It figures in the climax of the film and is apparently supposed to be symbolic of some sort of epiphany that Cranston undergoes. But I'm not sure what the epiphany was or what caused it. Nor do I care overmuch.)

At any rate, when The Shadow swings into action, one senses Cranston's discomfort. It's as if The Shadow represents a side of himself he'd rather forget he had.

Trying to cut through the shadow world of Lamont Cranston is, as always, Margo Lane — luminously played by Penelope Ann Miller. With blonde hair and frequently radiant gowns, she is literally light to Cranston's (and Baldwin's) darkness. The film's best moments (not unlike Vicki Vale and Bruce Wayne) are when the romantic relationship staggers into existence. The foreboding side of the male lead threatens to overwhelm the budding romance, but Miller's Margo is a tough cookie, not easily intimidated. When she informs Cranston that she does not fear his evil side, one can only take her at her word.

Director Russell Mulcahy milks thoughtful, controlled, and focused

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performances from his cast, which also includes Peter Boyle as Moe and Sir Ian McKellen as Margo's father, Reinhardt.

Koepp's script has a witty, playful quality to it. There's just enough pretention-puncturing wisecracks to prevent the material from being too ponderous. Occasionally the flip, inopportune colloquialisms cause the film to teeter on the edge of self-parody, and only the rock-solid acting and directing salvages it.

The special effects give us a range of visual treats, ranging from The Shadow's rapid-fire, now-you-see-him-now-you-don't fighting style to a sequence wherein Margo — experiencing Cranston's dark side first hand — finds herself completely surrounded by a wall of fire that seems to have a life of its own.

So there's a lot to recommend *The Shadow*. I'd even recommend that fans see it.

But be aware that there's just one little problem.

It doesn't really work.

The elements are all there: the acting, the directing, the script. Even Jerry Goldsmith's music, which frequently sounds the same from one film to the next, is snappy. But the whole is not equal to the parts.

With a film like this there are two ways to play it: either you've got to make the leads accessible and likeable as individuals or you've got to involve the viewer by building up the mystery. *The Shadow* neither, and, consequently, long stretches of the film are uninvolving.

There's no mystery, because we're introduced to Cranston too early in the game. The entire backstory is in the first 10 minutes. We know he starts out as a sadistic creep. We know what he's going to do and be taught to do and how he's going to do it. Then there's a 45-second expository crawl to tell us again what he was just taught and what he's going to do with the knowledge.

Then we cut to New York, where (in the film's best sequence) he goes out and does it, kicking butt and taking names on the Brooklyn Bridge.

Far better to have cut the first 10 minutes, start on the bridge, and make us wonder who the guy is and where he comes from. When you're dealing with a walking enigma, allow us to spend at least a few minutes wondering about him.

But the filmmakers opted not to. Instead they focused on Cranston the man. Cranston, though, is too cold, too remote, and too consumed with his inner darkness to be likeable. We don't want to spend two hours with him; we'd prefer to get as far away as possible, because frankly, he gives the creeps. (Unlike, for instance, Keaton's Bruce Wayne, who at least had a sort of goofy distractedness in *Batman* that made him entertaining — although that seemed to vanish in the second film.)

The burden then falls to Miller's Margo to make Cranston accessible to us. Ideally, we should identify with her, and what she finds loveable about Cranston will draw us to him, as well. Theoretically, she should serve the same function as Kim Basinger's Vicki Vale.

But she doesn't, because — well — she's weird.

Margo can't serve as the everywoman, civilian, audience point of view to Cranston, because she's almost as loopy as he is. She complains of hearing voices, she reads Cranston's mind, she communicates telepathically, she enters his dreams. This is not an audience representative being drawn, irresistibly and against her better judgement, into The Shadow's world. This is someone who never belonged anywhere else *but* with The Shadow. She's not one of "us". She's one of "him".

The rest of the characters in Cranston's world — Wainright or Moe — are merely functionaries, given no personalities or quirks of their own.

We want to care. We want to be mystified. Instead we simply watch — and marvel at the effects, and the costumes, and the sets — and Miller looks damned good in those sexy gowns. (There's one sequence where she's changing behind a dressing screen and Cranston can't keep his eyes off. Naturally. What he's seeing is her shadow.) We're even entertained, although we check our watch from time to time and find ourselves wishing that there was more stuff with The Shadow in action.

And even when The Shadow does swing into operation, too often he quickly ditches the hat and cloak and pursues matters as the unmade-up Cranston (although, in these instances, he does bear an uncanny resemblance to Dominic Fortune). It's as if The Shadow is an arbitrary creation that Cranston doffs at will, thus diminishing the interesting psychological bent that the script suggests.

There are moments. Moments such as a morning scene wherein Margo, just waking up (her nightgown modestly low rather than having ridden up around her hips — sorry, guys), describes in sensual and intimate detail a dream she had about basking nude on a beach. Then she makes the mistake of asking Cranston how his slumber went.

"I dreamt I ripped the skin off my skull and there was someone else underneath," he replies truthfully.

"You really need help," she informs him.

Ultimately, *The Shadow* should be seen (so to speak) and enjoyed for what it is: a decent film.

It's just a shame, since, with some thought - and a lot more moments like the one just described — it could have been more than just a shadow of a great film.

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Quitely does it every time

ANOTHER up-and-coming member of comics "Scotia Nostra" has his sights set firmly on the USA.

Artist Vincent Deighan (Frank Quitely) is working on a range of projects for DC, Marvel and Dark Horse with writers Alan Grant, Gordon Rennie and Robbie Morrison.

"Quitely" came to the attention of comics fans through his work on the Scottish underground title **Electric Soup**. He was creator of one of the magazine's most acclaimed features, a parody of DC Thomson's *The Broons* (entitled, not unbelievably, *The Greens*). He then worked full-time for Fleetway's **Judge Dredd Megazine**, on strips such as *Shimura* and *Missionary Man*.

Quitely's breakthrough into the American market came with a number of black and white short stories for Paradox Press, including contributions to **The Book of Death**, **Book of Conspiracies**, **Weirdos** and **Urban Legends**.

Further work emerged in the shape of a three-part creator-owned series for Dark Horse. Written by Robbie Morrison, the story features **Blackheart**, a 1930s-style black vigilante. Described as an old fashioned gangster story with racial tension added, the central character is a Blues guitarist who has sold his soul to the devil, using his resulting invincibility to fight crime.

The series begins in the November issue of **Dark Horse Presents**.

He has also completed pencils for a **Lobo** one-shot special for DC, featuring the last Czarnian head-to-head with a group of "homonists", the macho equivalent of feminists.

Written by Alan Grant, the story features Lobo's search for a men's magazine magnate, kidnapped by Iron Dick and his merry band of male-bonders. The porn-king's palm print is required to open vaults which contain the printing plates for the next issue, and minus chain and hook, Lobo must find him.

More work is in prospect with DC where discussions are currently taking place with editor Art Young over a potential Vertigo Visions 64-page special on the character *Flex Mentallo*, who was first featured in Grant Morrison's **Doom Patrol**.

Quitely is also awaiting final confirmation from Marvel on a fully-painted **Wolverine** strip, part of a proposed new monthly, **Marvel Sketchbook**, and a decision is expected soon. *(Rob Reid)*

UK X-Men comic

FOLLOWING **Conan**, Marvel UK is launching an **X-Men** comic on October 1st to tie-in with the animated TV series. The 75p fortnightly features Jim Lee's **Uncanny X-Men** and **X-Men** strips plus **X-Men Adventures**.

Two other TV-connected launches are **Ren & Stimpy** and **Beavis & Butt-Head**. Both titles are to debut in October.

Doctor Who — Age of Chaos is a reprint £3.99 one-shot for October.

IN BRIEF

Reviews on the net

LEADING UK retail chain Forbidden Planet has taken the lead in setting up a comics review column on the Internet, a computer modem bulletin board.

Titled *Reviews From the Forbidden Planet*, it can be accessed at the following E-mail address: *http://www.maths.tcd.ie/mmm/reviewsfromtheforbiddenplanet.html* The column welcomes comic fans submissions of news and reviews.

It is set up with Hypertext links which allow moving around between interlinked files without having to switch back to the menu screen.

Forbidden Planet also hopes to be able to add a comics news page at a later date in conjunction with **Comics International**. Further information can be obtained from Kenny Penman on 0103531 6710688.

Sam Jam on Mac

THE THIRD issue of Andi Watson's **Samurai Jam** has just been released under the Slave Labor Graphics imprint.

The Brighton-based creator has announced that the publication is moving into the technological age as the next issue will be solely generated on an Apple Mac computer, including all of the artwork by using an artist's line tool and pressure pad.

Samurai Jam #3 is on sale now and is priced $2.95.

Management changes

JESS Deacon, general manager of Titan Distributors, resigned on August 31st, due to health reasons.

"While I am looking forward to new challenges in the future," he commented, "I shall miss my friends and colleagues at Titan and Diamond and all the customers with whom I have built up a wonderful relationship over the years."

Deacon is replaced by John Hitchen, previously manager of Diamond's UK warehouse for the last two years.

Liam King replaces Hitchen as the manager of Diamond's West Drayton-based warehouse.

CM Comics crisis

FOLLOWING Marvel UK's failure to create a British-created superhero universe, the latest attempt — by Chris Morgan's CM Comics — has also met with failure. Due to low sales in the direct market, Morgan reports having closed the operation and being declared personally bankrupt this month.

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IN BRIEF

Not quite out

AS Gilbert Shelton's **Not Quite Dead #1** heads for a reprint, the news from Rip Off Press is that #2 may not be (all that) far behind.

Tony Bennett, managing director of Rip Off's UK associates, Knockabout Comics, confirms that he has seen tantalising glimpses of the artwork for the second issue of this collaboration between the Paris-based Shelton and cartoonist PIC.

Rip Off's Kathe Todd says that the further misadventures of the world's most experienced rock band are almost complete, and that a British edition is likely to be out within the next six months.

Fans of the creator of **The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers** and **Wonder Warthog** should apply the usual seasonal adjustments to the Shelton deadlines. *(Rob Reid)*

Comics course

A twelve week Cartoon and Comic Art course is starting at Islington Arts Factory between the 23rd September and December 9th.

The course is conducted by Dominic Wynn-Simmonds and costs £83 for the entire course.

Details available from Islington Arts Factory, 2 Parkhurst Road, London N7 0SF. Tel: 071 607 0561.

Comics exhibitions

THERE is an exhibition being staged at the National Museum of Cartoon Art in London in tribute to the late Jack Kirby, arguably the most influential creator to have ever worked in American comic books.

It will run between September 29th and October 21st, admission is free but donations are requested.

Between October 4th and December 9th also at the National Museum of Cartoon Art is Mirth of the Nation: the first exhibition of the Cartoon Art Trust Collection.

The exhibition features the works of some of Britain's finest cartoonists including from Heath Robinson, Donald McGill, Hoffnung, Giles and Ralph Steadman.

The museum is located at 183 Eversholt Street, near Euston station and is open midday to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Monty Python cards

TO coincide with the 25th anniversay of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, CMA/Framed Nostalgia is releasing a special 100 card set featuring highlights from the cult TV series.

The set will include three visually enhanced prism-etched cards and a fourth extra special card. Visuals have been taken from the Python archives, film location shots and frames from the television series.

The cards will be released this October but no information has been given about price.

New Guide lines

DUNCAN McAlpine, writer and publisher of **The Comic Book Price Guide for Great Britain**, is in negotiation with a UK book publisher for their taking over the book as of next year.

While Duncan will remain as editor, he cites as his main reasons for handing over the publishing reins the extra time it will give him to compile the book and that it will relieve him of the financial burdens.

It is also hoped that through an established book publisher, the annual's profile will be enhanced.

Cult convention

CULT TV is an ambitious celebration of all television shows with a fan following and will be held at Pontin's Seacroft Holiday Village, Hemsby, Norfolk over the weekend of the November 11-14th.

Guest include Carolyn Seymour (Zoe in *Quantum Leap*), author Harlan Ellison, Jon (*Doctor Who*) Pertwee, Syvia Anderson, Barry (*Space 1999*) Morse and Doctor Who's former assistants Annette Andre, Sophie Aldred and Deborah Watling plus writers Barry Letts, Terrance Dicks and Victor Pembleton.

The convention also offers four video theatres, debates, theme parties, dealer rooms and the 1st International Cult TV Awards.

4-day registration is £35 plus optional Pontin's room costs, or £40 on the door. Further information can be obtained from Cult TV, PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE1 1EX.

An early diary item for thirteen months ahead is Phoenix, which will primarily be a Star Trek convention but will deal with many types of comics and related ephemera.

Phoenix will be held during October 1995 and it is hoped that all the money raised will be donated to the convention organisers nominated charities: Dave Prowse's The Force Against Arthritis, The British Diabetic Association and the RSPCA.

New small press

WHILE the professional UK industry reaches an all-time low, this month sees a host of high quality small press titles being released including one with a cover by former Marvel UK artist Henry (**Killfrenzy**) Flint.

● **Cleansing Services: Special Ops #1** is the first appearance of Oxford-based artist Neill Cameron's tongue-in-cheek toilet cleaners with an attitude. The 24 page black and white features the Henry Flint cover and retails for £1.00.

● **Spirit of the Highwayman** is a £1.50 32-page black and white horror comic set in the eighteenth century. Plot and art is provided by David Hitchcock and the script is by Owen Richards.

● London Cartoon Centre manager and former comic shop employee Steve Marchant draws on his time in retail and other true life experiences for his unique view of life in **Stupidface**. The third issue is in shops now, priced £1.50.

● Drat 'n' Blast Books releases the third issue of their professional quarterly magazine **Scenes From the Inside** this month, priced £2.75. It features 68 black and white pages including creators such as Luke Walsh, Danny Jenkins, Andi Watson, Fahreed Choudhury and Matthew Burton.

All of the above will be available in comic shops this month, or by post as advertised elsewhere.

Comics invasion of bookshops

COURTESY of Titan, Boxtree and Reed Books, a new wave of trade paperbacks and graphic novels is due to hit bookshops this winter.

New Titan releases

TITAN Books is releasing four new trade paperbacks, two of which tie-in with the current cinema popularity of the Dark Horse-created character *The Mask*.

The Mask and **The Mask Returns** reprint the Dark Horse mini-series from 1990 and 1992.

Both books are written by John Arcudi and drawn by Doug Mahnke. The first tells the story of how Stanley Ipkiss discovers the mask which leads him into a world of "seriously deranged violence and bad jokes" and shows how strongly the film was influenced by the original story. The second goes beyond the movie with a female Mask character.

The Mask retails for £8.99 and **The Mask Returns** retails for £7.99. Both are in shops now.

Titan's other two trade paperback launches both feature Superman. **Superman: Time and Time Again** reprints the story which ran across all the Superman titles in 1990, where a time-displaced Man of Steel desperately fights to get back to present day Metropolis.

Written by Roger Stern, Dan Jurgens and Jerry Ordway, the £4.99 book features art by Jurgens and Ordway and Bob McLeod.

Zero Hour: A Crisis in Time is a timely release following the completion of the series in the US.

Reprinting the key issues of the **Zero Hour** story, the £5.99 book is in shops on October 6th. It also includes the prequel story to **Zero Hour** from **Showcase '94**.

Boxtree books

BOXTREE has three new titles for November release.

Frank Miller and John Romita Jr's **Daredevil: Man Without Fear** reprints the critically acclaimed Marvel five-issue prestige series and retails for £9.99.

The first two books of Rumiko Takahashi's **Ranma 1/2** series are also set for November relase, each priced £5.99.

Ranma 1/2 tells the story of Ranma the boy, who changes into Ranma the girl when he gets wet and how the woman he is arranged to marry gets on better with the female personality than the male.

Reed Books manga

FOUR manga graphic novels will be released by Reed's graphic novel division Mandarin Books under the Equinox Manga imprint in special dump bin displays this November.

Akira: The Beginning prints the first 368 pages of Katsuhiro Otomo's futuristic epic in full colour, and retails for £10.99

Domu and **Memories** are two new works also by Otomo. **Domu** was the project that first brought Otomo to prominence in Japan and **Memories** is a collection of his short stories. Both books are 256 pages and retail for £8.99.

The fourth title from Equinox Manga is the hugely popular **Gon** by Masashi Tanaka. The wordless 256 page trade paperback tells the adventures of a belligerent and devious little dinosaur in Jurassic times and retails for £8.99.

Hard Boiled competition winners

FOLLOWING the overwhelming response to our **Hard Boiled** competition in conjunction with Tartan Video in our August issue, the following are the lucky winners who correctly named:

i. **Lone Wolf & Cub** (as the US manga comic featuring a warrior and a baby).
ii. Frank Miller (as the comic writer who had a series also named **Hard Boiled**).
iii. Tequila (as the nickname given to the film's main character, Inspector Yuen).

(Sorry, no consolation prizes for the entry naming Arthur Ranson as writer of **Hard Boiled**)

VIDEO WINNERS:

Claire Atkins, Bedford
Matthew Barber, Edinburgh
Alan Blott, Plymouth
Graham Buckley, Hartlepool
Nigel Burrough, Bristol
Francis Charlton, Guildford
D. Connolly, Belfast
Nigel Davies, New Malden
Nick Dyer, Reading
Alan Finch, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Richard Firth, Bridlington
D. Hanser, Basildon
David Jackson, London N6
Stuart Jones, Manchester
Andrew Mountford, Sheffield
Tim Pilcher, London W11
Matthew Pook, Bournemouth
Sunil Ranmal, Bridgwater
G. J. Richards, London W8
Shaun Whiteheart, Sunderland

T-SHIRT WINNERS:

Michael Anyanwu, London E12
Christopher Cameron, London NW7
Michael Clare, London NW3
Bill Collins, Wolverhampton
Graham Crossman, Aldershot
Adrian Earl, Northolt, Middlesex
Daniel Farrell, Rickmansworth
J. Farrell, Burnopfield, Co Durham
Jonathan Hamblin, Woking, Surrey
Gary Henderson, Londonderry
David Mattocks, Coventry
R. Mearing, Worcester Park, Surrey
J. Parrish, Sunderland
Stephen Pelluet, Shoreham-by-Sea
Jason Powell, Manchester
M. Preston, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
J. E. Tomlinson, Manchester
Simon Tsang, Liverpool
Mark Viner, London SE26
G. Xydas, Hornchurch

BASEBALL CAP WINNERS:

Peter Ashton, Eastleigh, Hants
L. Basaran, London N14
R. Beatty, Barrow-in-Furness
Shaun Dey, London SE11
David Duane, Congresbury, Avon
John Hall, Salford
Andrew Johnstone, Cumbernauld
James Lovegrove, Kew, Surrey
Angus Mackenzie, Ross & Cromarty
Richard Miller, Dumbarton
Peter O'Donnell, Greenock
C. R. Robins, Newport, Isle of Wight
Marlon Seton, London SE10
D. Storey, Stanley, Co Durham
Stuart Taylor, Bournemouth
Lyndon Thomas, Bridgend
Dylan Vincent-Bennett, Wakefield
Jonathan Weeks, London SW16
Greg Whitbread, Orsett, Essex
Paul Young, Workington
...and for S. K. Bali of Peterborough, who added to his entry a note stating "Please let me win, I never win anything", we're sending a free copy of this issue to break his otherwise perfect track record.

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MEDIAFILE

Associate editor Sarah Bolesworth looks at recent media coverage of comics and related product

AN AMERICAN comic-shop owner was, in November 1993, sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "retail display of material harmful to minors".

To gather affidavits for his appeal against the sentence, Michael Johnson of Sarasota, Florida, has recently contacted publishers, asking them to substantiate his claim that the charges against him were made on false premises.

Johnson writes from the county jail, Sarasota, to say that five titles were seized during a raid on his comic store in the town, and although he does not detail the other four, the fifth "comic book" involved was issue 115 of the now defunct UK comics magazine, **Speakeasy**.

The notion that "retail display" alone — of *any* material — merits any prison sentence, let alone two years, seems a little hysterical for state law; they must be short of people to lock up out there in Sarasota.

But the more you look at this case, the more surreal it becomes (I reserve first claim on the rights for *The Strange Case of the Sarasota Comic Book Store*, a TV drama/comic-book series. With of course David *Twin Peaks* Lynch to direct/draw).

Firstly, as former **Speakeasy** editor Stuart Green points out in his reply to Michael Johnson's plea, "**Speakeasy** was a monthly magazine that carried news about, and previews of, upcoming comic books and graphic novels". It is not, of course, a comic book. But asking a Sarasota county sheriff on a righteous mission to differentiate between a magazine and a comic book is like (to use an appropriate hicksville metaphor) asking a bull meeting a cow on heat not to mate.

That does not, of course, negate any part of Michael Johnson's claim of false premises. But the issue of **Speakeasy**'s proper definition is a matter of fact, easily provable in a court of law. Florida state law, however, regarding "minors", is another question altogether.

The law under which Johnson was charged — Florida Statute 847,0125 — states that material "harmful to minors" is any that (among others) "predominantly appeals to the prurient or morbid interests of minors". But if kids already have "prurient or morbid interests", what difference is a comic book — or a comics news magazine — going to make? Are such interests going to be encouraged by comics more than by other media, either broadcast or print, that are freely available to minors?

"Harmful to minors" in this statute is also defined as "any representation, in whichever form, of nudity, sexual conduct, or sexual excitement ... " But that would by definition be breached by any of the primetime TV soaps — *Beverley Hills 90210* and *Baywatch* in particular spring to mind, and yet both these are aimed at young audiences. And just how young can that be, if the transmission time coincides with when kids get back from school? Providing that there's nothing explicit, kids of any age — unless prevented by their parents — have free access to acres of bare flesh and sexual excitement.

A case in point, *Baywatch* — the US soap ostensibly about coastguards but in fact a celebration of body culture — focuses primarily on little other than nudity and sexual relationships, despite what the producers say about not encouraging prurience.

But do Sarasota sheriffs bust the local networked TV station? They do not, because the power of the networks is such that litigation would cost Florida too much and would, more importantly, backfire in political and publicity terms.

A comics shop, however, is a much easier target, and no independent comics retailer is going to have the clout — either political or financial — to fight (and thus win) the case in public. Thus by charging and convicting an individual who has little or no chance of successfully defending himself, the county sheriff's office is seen to be upholding "prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for minors" without suffering any political or financial fall-out.

But Florida is, as well as being a big citrus producer and the home of Swamp Thing, the retirement state of the US. And among those beach condos and old people's homes, there's a lot of votes for the moral majority — or as it's now known, the Christian Coalition.

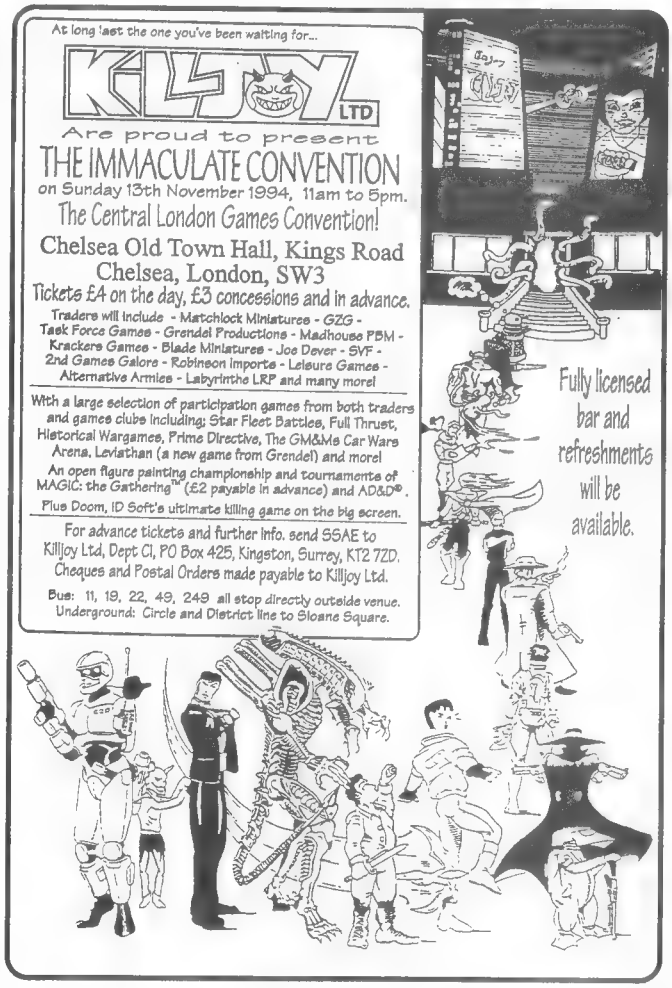
So much for "The Sunshine State". Just remember, that's where they chose to locate Disneyland; and like Disneyland, all your fantasies will only come true if you pay the entrance fee.

As Michael Johnson says: "And to think they used to call this "the land of the Free". Well, Michael, it ain't; it's now the land of the *Fee*.

Liefeld's flesh 'n' blood

Flesh is on the agenda for Rob Liefeld this month, and in fact plays a major part in his ongoing bid to get the animated *Youngblood* series off the drawing board, onto TV and out of debt.

After an alleged dispute with US TV network CBS over the "flesh and gun" content of the series (the network wanted less; who knows what Rob wanted), Liefeld, who is reported to have invested a six-figure sum in the adaptation, has entered into negotiations with Rupert Murdoch's Fox TV network. So if that deal is successfully concluded, we can look forward (presumably) to *Youngblood* appearing on Sky TV in the UK.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RANSON NOTES

A monthly column in which leading comics artist Arthur Ranson examines the social impact, artistic content and foibles of contemporary comics and their creators.

SELF-questioning is a solitary vice I have been trying to give up. Against my best intentions and weakened from poisoning by numbers, I am at it again. London's latest mystery virus has made joined-up thinking difficult, but trying to write for the fanzine **Tripwire** on the subject of the kind of writing I do for **Comics International**, I found myself confessing to be prompted by Pedagogy and Mischief. A combination of both, the scope of Dostoyevsky with Perelman's style, is an ideal. But separately either motive is suspect.

I wouldn't say my family were slow but the only things expressed in our house were opinions. The common condition of holding an opinion then seeking an excuse for holding it, is one I am struggling to reverse in myself.

The belief that the world stands in need of hearing what I think however, is too in-built. I confess to having been a school-teacher *and* to having enjoyed it.

The mischief is more elusive. Where the tendency to prefer a funny phrase to a strictly factual one comes from, I do not know. Suffice it to say, it exists.

In the words of the immortal bard, "I'm just a boy who tries to be good, oh Lord, please don't let me be understood". In the case of **Comics International** pieces, it must be my fault if I fail to make myself clear. That I do is evidenced by comments in readers letters. I may feel "Of all the griefs that harass the distressed, sure the most bitter is the scornful jest," but it is great that people actually do write.

Our revered editor has expressed doubts about my responding in print as he fears potential exclusivity. Unless you have read the previous two or three issues, the subject of the debate could be a mystery. So for faith, hope and clarity let me rehearse my motivation.

Comics are a popular art form whose value is underestimated. I would like to see them better appreciated and understood both by readers and the cultural establishment at large. But this requires intellectual critical appraisal of the products and of their effects.

Praising or condemning comics — or a particular work, artist or writer — needs justifying by description and analysis of the subject and one's response to it. There are examples of this approach: **Comics Forum** does it and I even read a thought-provoking piece in **Comics World** (by Warren Ellis on Jack Kirby).

By and large though, my impression is that the writing about comics creators is too indulgent and personality centred, and the writing about comics is intent not on discussion but on drawing up battle-lines. The wars of evaluation, the CIA (committed, intelligent, artistic) versus the KGB (knackered, gormless, botched). Or careless, insulting, abominable and knowledgeable, genuine, beautiful.

It was, I take it, a similar perception on the part of Gillian Jaysmith (**Comics International** #45, *Comment*) that led her to renounce the public expression of negative feelings about any comic — the "if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all" approach.

I think it would be a pity if her self-censorship catches on. We need to know what comic readers think about our work — nice, nasty or both, even about the same work. Preferably with an explanation why, by what yardstick and with distinctions between the kinds of criteria they are using. For example, from outside comics (for reasons of public order and private security).

I do not like *Mr. Bean* on TV, **The Sun** newspaper, or the film *Prospero's Books*. To express that dislike as "X is rubbish" is inadequate and in most senses untrue. It fails to distinguish between examples, does not describe in what way they fail or against what criteria, or even in what way my subjective response is experienced.

Gillian also raised questions about the authority and independence of critics. To quote the superhero from Nazareth, "By what fruits ye shall know them". Clive James never directed a movie but as a film critic his arguments were cogent, his opinions intelligent and his style entertaining. The same from Stephen Superdirector or Freda Filmfan would have been equally acceptable.

Anything you see in any comic is the product of investment in time, cash, talent, work, discipline and organisation. It requires experience, creativity and critical judgement, all compromised by costings and deadlines. People are being paid to do this, they are professionals so the buyer need not be too tolerant.

Not all of the above virtues are always applied unstintingly and it *is* the readers' money they share out between them, but such criteria should be kept in mind before rushing to give a zero rating.

Critical has two general meanings: (i) fond of forming (generally harsh) judgments, censorious; (ii) pertaining to, deliberate, reasoned, balanced judgement (**The Universal English Dictionary**, 1932).

Now I would not lie to you, except to amuse myself, so I admit the second of these definitions is a difficult undertaking. Particularly for comics where there seems to be no defined and accepted criteria for judgement. That I have failed in it, or to write clearly enough (or he to read?) was shown by Lawrence Bowkett's letter (**Comics International** #45) stating his belief that I do not consider the writing in comics to be important.

This is the exact opposite of what I believe. To complete the Johnson quote "Fate never wounds more deep the generous heart than when a blockhead's insult points the dart". Choosing to concentrate my criticism on the quality of writing stems from my belief that it is of extreme, perhaps primary, importance.

That art is often the determining factor in the purchase of comics is double trouble for writers. Poor art can leave good stories spoiled or unread, good art the temptation to use it to hide weaknesses in the story.

To get the balance between art and writing is both difficult and a pleasure to do. When they combine, it's wonderful to see. The sum is greater than the parts.

Any serious assessment of comics has also to acknowledge the economics of production. Comic books are a popular art competing with other popular arts. They are commercial art. Traditionally they have tried to be cheap and accessible and profits are from quantity, not necessarily quality. The sheer number of publications, the requirements of deadlines, maintaining existing titles... these all require a prodigious amount of writing and drawing.

As an example, for a decade or so Angus Allan wrote every story — adventure, humour and biographic — every week, for **Look-In**, and never produced an unreadable story. What he did was a remarkable achievement. To have expected Great Art would be absurd, to recognise the art in what he did would be to do it justice. How much material today's popular writers put out is unknown to me, but a bloody lot is my approximate calculation.

The years that authors take to produce novels are a luxury not allowed these folk. But the result of this is not necessarily bad, either. It can make for a directness and simplicity that can be a pleasure in itself. That it can make for triteness and inconclusiveness is something we can comment on if it happens.

The search for economy in drawing has the same causes — and effects. That some creators put quality before speed is a bonus, and an argument for decent royalty payments.

My sense of purpose seems to have overcome my sense of fun on this occasion. I hope new readers could keep up. It's not always like this. You should have seen it last month. It was a hilarious piece about deconstructionism and its effects on the bedroom habits of editors.

© Arthur Ranson, 1994

*Arthur Ranson is one of the UK's top comics artists. In the 1970s, he started work at **Look-In** and for many years drew a wide range of TV and pop-related strips.*

*It is a mark of his versatility that, having won popular and critical acclaim for Danger Mouse, he went on to achieve the same with **2000AD** drawing Anderson: Psi Division and currently Buttonman II.*

A graphic novel of the first Buttonman serial is now in all good German comic shops. In English it isn't due until February.

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OPENS MIDDAY

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sqbd	=	*perfect bound; squared spine; without staples*
b&w	=	*black & white content*
pc	=	*part-colour content*
hbk	=	*hardback (book) edition*
tpbk	=	*trade paperback, squarebound, comic size*
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V = violence; N = nudity; S = sex

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Deathstroke, the Hunted 42 (Wolfman & Cariello + Blyberg) Slade Wilson confronts his own immortality. $1.95

Flash 96 (Waid & Larocca + Marzan Jr) *Terminal Velocity, Part 2* (of 6). Flash is back, but why? Impulse needs to be better than he currently is, and Wally and Linda's lives are threatened by near-future events. ... $1.50

Hardware 22 (Milestone; Clay + Ramos & Rollins) Hardware comes face to face with a new threat — a rival for his girlfriend's affections. $1.75

Judge Dredd 5 (Helfer & Oeming) Fargo sends Dredd out to face thousands of perps on his own. $1.95

Justice League International Quarterly 17 (various) Final issue of the extra-curricular JLA title. $3.50

Legion of Super-Heroes 63 (Waid + McCraw & Moder + Boyd) Live Wire's secret is revealed to the rest of the team. .. $1.95

NEW **Mob Fire 1** (Ushaw & Pleece) Six-issue mini combining black magic and the London mob scene... $2.50

Primal Force 2 (Seagle & Hooper + Kaalberg) The end of the world is at hand. Cataclysm is the causal factor. $1.95

Sandman Mystery Theatre 21 (Vertigo; M Wagner + Seagle & Locke) *Dr Death, Part 1* (of 4). The Golden Age Sandman has to solve the mystery of Manhattan's older

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residents dying inexplicably. Mature readers. $1.95
Shade, the Changing Man 54 (Vertigo; Milligan & Buckingham + Bryant) Shade's desperate attempts to cheer himself up take an unexpected twist when he meets a deaf woman on the dance floor of a local club Mature readers. $1.95
The Spectre 24 (Ostrander & Mandrake) The Spectre uses humans to anchor his existence in the universe — but what happens to them when he's finished with them? $1.95
Star Trek 66 (Weistein & Derenick + Starr) Spock runs into Stonn, for the first time in many years. $1.95
Superboy 10 (Kesel & H. Ramos + Hazlewood) Back to Hawaii, and Superboy's relationship with Tana gets serious. . $1.50
Superman: The Man of Steel 39 (L Simonson & Bogdanove + Janke) The body of Superman is still very much a talking point in Metropolis and Clark thinks Luthor holds the key to the mystery. $1.50
Wonder Woman 92 (Loebs & Deodato Jr) The new Wonder Woman is revealed, as well Diana's mother's motives. $1.50

SHIPPING OCTOBER 18TH

Batman: Shadow of the Bat 33 (Grant & Blevins) Batman has to quell a prison riot started by Two-Face. $1.95
The Demon 53 (Ennis & McCrea) Jason Blood stands in the demon's way as Etrigan brings his children to Earth. $1.95
Green Lantern 57 (Marz & Banks + Tanghal) Green Lantern runs up against the mind-controlling powers of Psimon, and finds himself used to defeat the New Titans.$1.50
The Guardians of Metropolis 2 (Kesel & Dwyer) Four-issue series exploring the adventures of the Jack Kirby-created characters — The Guardian and the Newsboy Legion. $1.50
Hawkman 15 (Messner-Loebs & Lieber + Shoultz) Hawkman becomes involved in a centuries-old war — and a confrontation with Aquaman. $1.95
Hellblazer 84 (Vertigo; Delano & Watkiss) A tale from John Constantine's past, written by former writer Delano. Mature readers. $1.95
Icon 20 (Milestone; Bright + Gustovich) Icon returns to his home planet, leaving his pregnant protege Rocket as Dakota's only protector. $1.75
Justice League America 94 (Jones & Wojtkiewicz + Dvorak) The fate of an old friend is revealed, and an old ally returns to the team. $1.50
Moonshadow 4 (DeMatteis & Muth) 12-part reprint of a 1985 Epic series. $1.95
The New Titans 116 (Wolfman & Jones + Collazo + Candelario) Continued from **Green Lantern** 57. ..... $1.95
Shadows Fall 2 (Rieber & Van Fleet) What happens when you lose your shadow? Mature readers. $2.95
Starman 2 (Robinson & Harris) Starman returns to Opal City and faces more of Mist's agents. $1.95
NEW **Star Trek: The Next Generation/ Star Trek: Deep Space Nine 1** (Friedman & Purcell + Pallot) Cross-company storyline featuring cast members from both of the TV series. $2 50
Superman 95 (Jurgens & Breeding) Braniac doesn't know the truth about the body in the tomb. $1.50
Vamps 5 (of 6; Vertigo; Lee & Simpson) A team of female vampires on motorbikes cut a bloody swathe across the US. Mature readers. $1.95
Xombi 7 (Rozum & Birch) Xombi stumbles on a sinister cult. $1.75

SHIPPING OCTOBER 25TH

Adventures of Superman 518 (K Kesel & Kitson + McCarthy) Superman travels to Apokolips to question Darkseid and the Cyborg Superman.. ..... $1.50
Animal Man 78 (Vertigo; Delano & Pugh) The Life-Power Church is becoming ominously chaotic. Mature readers. . $1.95
Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 66 (DeMatteis & Staton) The Joker regains his sanity and becomes citizen Joe Kerr. $1.95
Blood Syndicate 21 (Milestone; Velez Jr & Battle & Quijano) A goldmine is found in a garage — but whose gold is it? $1.75
Detective Comics 680 (Dixon & Weeks + Hanna) Batman and Two-Face have a confrontation in Gotham's City Hall of Records. $1.50
Fate 2 (Moore & Williams + Lanning) Fate battles Bloostain for Nabu's legacy. . $1.95
Gunfire 7 (Wein & Benes + Garvey) The Yakuza becomes involved in Gunfire's schemes, and steal his friend Ben. . . $1.95
NEW **Judge Dredd: Legends of the Law 1** (Wagner + Grant & Anderson + Palmiotti) $1.95
Justice League Task Force 18 (Waid & Velluto + Albrecht) Martian Manhunter complies with a plea for help from Vandal Savage. $1.50
Legionnaires 19 (Peyer & Moy + Boyd) Political problems arise over the presence of the new member on a delicate mission$1.50
Outsiders 13 (Barr & Pelletier + Campanella) The Eradicator and the new Outsiders find a disused STAR labs facility and decide to use it as their new base. $1.95
The Ray 7 (Priest & Porter + Jones) The Ray is mutated, and Black Canary becomes the target of his anger. $1.95
R.E.B.E.L. '94 #2 (Peyer & Aucoin) The new rebel team start quarrelling with each other, thus threatening a future mission. $1.95
Sandman 65 (Gaiman & Hempel) Blood is spilt in the Dreaming, a possible signal of the end of the dream itself. $1.95
Shadow Cabinet 7 (Milestone; Wayne & Leon) Hardware makes a guest appearance as the Cabinet search for new team members. $1.75
Star Trek Next Generation 66 (Friedman & Skelton) An alien responsible for saving a planet's enviroment suffers a violent change of personality. $1.95
Steel 10 (L Simonson & Fosco + Stegbaur) Steel is arrested for a series of murders; all the indicators point to his guilt. $1.50
Swamp Thing 149 (Vertigo; Millar & Hester + DeMulder) Swamp Thing battles Sargon the Sorcerer, and the Parliament of Stones unveils its new champion. $1.95
Xenobrood 2 (of 7; Moench & Coker + Aiken) Introducing a new team of superpowered teenagers. $1.50

SHIPPING NOVEMBER 1ST

Action Comics 705 (Michelinie & Guice + Rodier) Superman returns to the doubting Metropolis and steals his other body, forcing the villain to reveal himself. $1.50
Anima 9 (Witcover + Hand & Crespo + Blyberg) The Nameless One is on Earth, but Superboy is at hand. $1.95
Batman Adventures 27 (Puckett & Parobeck) Based on the animated TV series. $1.50
Books of Magic 8 (Vertigo; Rieber & Gross) Tim has a vision of both good and evil in his future self and decides to cast some spells. Mature readers. $1.95
Catwoman 16 (Dixon & Balent) Catwoman, trapped in a mission by the government, suddenly realises that her chances of survival are almost nil. $1.50
The Darkstars 26 (Friedman & Collins + Branch) Donna Troy and her deputies mourn the apparent death of Colos. $1.95
Doom Patrol 86 (Vertigo; Pollack & McKeever) The False Healers want to save the planet — even if it means destroying it Mature readers. $1.95
Green Arrow 92 (Puckett & Aparo) Green Arrow has a new sidekick who is immediately mistaken for GA. $1.95
Guy Gardner: Warrior 26 (Smith & Byrd + Davis) The secrets behind Gardner's new powers are revealed as he tests them against the ultimate terrorist, Black Serpent. . $2.50
Kobalt 7 (Milestone; Rozum & Igle) Page charges into action to avert a real-life horror show. $1.75

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Manhunter 2 (Grant & Giarrano) Chase Lawler, the all-new Manhunter, battles the Wild Huntsman. $1.95
Robin 12 (Dixon & Jimenez + Kryssing) The question of whether to expose one's secret identity in a crisis is explored. $1.50
NEW **Star Trek: The Next Generation — Shadowheart 1** (Friedman & Erwin + Barnett) A 4-issue series featuring an adventure with Lieutenant Worf. $1.95

SHIPPING NOVEMBER 8TH

Aquaman 4 (David & Egeland + Vancata) Aquaman is faced with a real dilemma — should he attempt to stop Lobo from slaughtering the dolphin killers, or should he help him? $1.50
Batman: Castle of the Bat (Harris & Hampton) A 64-page *Elseworlds* graphic novel telling the Frankenstein myth with Batman as monster and Bruce Wayne as scientist. $5.95
Damage 8 (Joyner & Marimon + Hillsman) Damage's true origin is revealed during this 5-issue storyline. $1.95
NEW **Deathwish 1** (of 4; Blaustein & Williams + Palmiotti) Milestone's first title with a Mature Readers tag featuring the exploits of a transvestite killer and a mentally unstable hero. $1.75
The Invisibles 4 (Morrison & Yeowell) The conclusion of Dane McGowan's initiation as an Invisible may yet be the end of him. Mature readers. $1.95
Lobo 11 (Grant & Semieks + Dell) More dastardly adventures for the main man as he comes face to face with the Church of the Almighty Frag. $1.95
Looney Tunes 9 (Enyart + various) $1.50
Metropolis S.C.U. 2 (of 4; Goff & Krause + Marzan Jr.) Focusing on the Special Crimes Unit in Superman's adopted city. ... $1.50
Sgt. Rock Special 2 (various) New stories about the WWII veteran. $2.95
Static 18 (Milestone; Washington III & Wilfred + Quijano) Static faces a deadly woman called Princess Nightmaare, Empress of Ten Thousand Screaming Worlds of Terror. $1.75

DRAWN & QUARTERLY

Palookaville 6 (Seth) Homage to the **New Yorker** cartoonists of the '40s. $2.95

EC COMICS

Shock Suspenstories 10 Featuring stories by Davis, Wood, Kurtzman & Evans. $2.00
Tales from the Crypt 10 (anthology) With stories by Kamen, Ingels, Davis, Craig $2.00
Weird Science 10 (anthology) Featuring stories by Feldstein, Kamen, Roussos and Wood. $2.00
NEW **Crime Suspenstories Annual 1** (anthology title) $8.95
NEW **Haunt of Fear Annual 1** (anthology) $8.95
NEW **Weird Science-Fantasy Annual 1** (anthology) .. $8.95

FANTAGRAPHICS

Alex 5 (Kalesniko) Alex is reunited with his long-lost love Lori. Mature readers. . $2.95
NEW **Doofus 1** (Altergott) Mature readers. $2.75
Eightball 14 (Clowes) Featuring four stories, including *The Death of Dan Pussey*. Mature readers. b&w $2.95
Hate 16 (Bagge & Blanchard) $2.95
Jim Vol II #4 (Woodring) The adventures of the silent dog, Frank. b&w $2.95
Naughty Bits 14 (Gregory) Bitchy discovers her old friend is gay. Mature readers. $2.50
Pogo Vol.2 (Kelly) Reprint collection of Kelly's 1949 **Pogos**. $9.95

IMAGE COMICS

NEW **Backlash 1** (Ruffner & Mariotte + Templeton) Backlash has to spring Taboo out of a high security government prison. $1.95
Badrock & Company 2 (Mangels & Nauck + Miki) Youngblood's big member teams up with other Image characters. $2.50
Bloodstrike 15 (Napton & Alstaetter) Bloodstrike & Prophet in 3-part x-over. ... $2.50
NEW **Black & White 1** (A & P Thibert) Mini-series exploring the partnership between a vigilante and a Chinese business woman. $1.95
Boof 3 (Smith & Cleary) Boof and Nick beat up the beach bully. $1.95
Boof and the Bruise Crew 4 (Smith & Harkins) A story involving couch comas, spitballs and gas-passin' warfare. ... $1.95
Brigade 13 (Stephenson & Winn + Alquiza) Thermal, covertly working for a newspaper, has completed her exposé of the team $2.50
Codename: Strykeforce 8 (Silvestri & Benetez) The alien who killed a member of the team is made its newest member. $1.95
Deathblow 10 (Lee + Choi & Sale) The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse are unleashed on New York City. $1.95
Doom's IV 4 (Liefeld & Pacella + Hathaway) Resolicited from July 1993 ..... $2.50
Freak Force 10 (Larsen & Bridges + Kesel) A boy with a serious hatred for his family and friends is given the power of a god. . $1.95
Hellshock 4 (Jae Lee) Hellshock begins to discover his real heritage as his powers begin to emerge. $1.95
Newmen 7 (Stephenson & Matsuda) On the run from the Brotherhood of Man. ... $2.50
Prophet Sourcebook (Extreme Studios) The definitive John Prophet. $2.95
Savage Dragon 14 (Larsen) Dragon is possessed, and the bad guys discover that Frank Darling is still alive. $1.95
Shadowhawk 14 (Valentino & Queen) Guest-starring characters from **1963**. $1.95
Spawn 19 & 20 (Orzechowski + Grossberg & Capullo + Pennington) Resolicited from May and June 1994. Houdini joins Spawn continuity. $1.95
Stormwatch 16 (Marz & Broome) The Stormwatch team races to prevent the deaths of thousands of people. $1.95
Supreme 20 (Hathaway & Nocon) Supreme faces the might of Thor and Odin. .. $2.50
NEW **Supreme: Glory Days 1** (Liefeld + Hathaway & Williams + Martin) Series exploring the reasons for Supreme's departure after WWII. $2.95
NEW **Team 7 #1** (Dixon & Weisenfeld + Scott) Image heroes' pre-superheroic lives. $2.50
Team Youngblood 14 (Extreme Studios) The team have a day off to relax, and Cougar goes on a date. $2.50
Troll Halloween Special (Mangels & Pedi) Troll teams up with Maxx and Julie to defeat Jack the Ripper, aka Mr Gone. $2.95
WildC.A.T.s Sourcebook (Wildstorm prods) The definitive WildC.A.T.s $2.50
WildC.A.T.s Adventures 2 (Mariotte & Templeton) Adaptation of the children's animated TV series. $1.95
WildC.A.T.s 15 (Choi & ?) No storyline information available. $2.50
Youngblood: Strikefile 8 (various) Pin-ups and solo stories about members of Youngblood. $2.95
Youngblood 10 (Liefeld) The new liaison for the team arrives. Shaft is unhappy. $2 50

KITCHEN SINK

NEW **The Acid Bath Case** (Walsh & Strom) Grim murder tale set in the '50s. 48pg b&w $4.95
Life and Adventures of Santa Claus NEW (Ploog) L. Frank Baum's tale adapted by former **Man-Thing** artist Mike Ploog. $24.95

LIGHTNING

Perg 10 (Abrams + Mowry & Zyskowski + Weed) Perg battles the Avenging Angel to prevent Elizabeth's soul from being returned to Heaven. $2.95
NEW **War Party 1** (Mowry & Zyskowski) Resolicited from May

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MALIBU

Dreadstar 6 (of 6; Bravura; David & Colon) Kalla kills her father, Vanth, but is it just a scheme set up by the Papal? $2.50
Edge 4 (of 4; Bravura; Grant & Kane) The first Ultimate returns from the dead and his origin is revealed. $2.50
Bruce Lee 4 (Baron & Mayerik + Sherman) Adventures of the martial arts legend. $2.95
Elven 0 (Strazewski & Luzniak) Reprinting stories from the first four issues of **Ultraverse Premiere**. $2.95
Firearm 15 (Ultraverse; Robinson & Carr) The next instalment of *Rafferty Saga* brings Sludge into the game. $1.95
Freex 14 (Ultraverse; Jones & Kolins) The Freex continue on their new path. .. $1.95
Hardcase 17 (Ultraverse; Hudnall & Luzniak) Hardcase comes home from a hard day and runs into NM-E. $1.95
Lord Pumpkin 0 (Danko & Lopresti) The origin of the Sludge villain. $2.50
Mantra 15 (Ultraverse; Barr & Hitch) No information available. $1.95
Mortal Kombat: Goro, Prince of Pain 2 (Marshall & Burdine + Rae) Three-issue series featuring a character from the **Mortal Kombat** title. $2.95
The Night Man 13 (Ultraverse; Englehart & Van Wormer) Night Man is on the trail of a serial killer. $1.95
Prime 17 (Ultraverse; Jones + Strazewski & Staterna) Kevin moves to New York and bumps into Atalon. $1.95
NEW **Prime Annual 1** (Jones + Strazewski & Breyfogle) Prime takes on Doc Gross. Cover: Vallejo. . $3.95
Prototype 14 (Ultraverse; Strazewski & Robinson) The Manhattan Project is unveiled, but things go badly wrong. $1.95
Mortal Kombat 4 (Marshal & Rolo + Rae) Game-based title. $2.95
Rune 7 (Ulm & Saltares) The start of a new story for the *Ultraverse* vampire. $1.95
Sludge 12/Ultraverse Premiere 8 (Gerber & Lopresti + Martin) Prime v Sludge, and the slime hits the fan. $3.50
Solitaire 11 (Ultraverse; Jones & Parker + Lowe) Solitaire finds that he has to fight for his freedom. $1.95
The Solution 14 (Ultraverse; Hudnall & Staterna) The villains from issue #1 return, again confronted by Dragon Fang. .. $1.95
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine/Star Trek: The Next Generation 1 (Barr & Purcell + Pallot) Malibu's version of the DC/Malibu crossover title. $2.50
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine 15 (Bingham & Eldred + McCorkindale) Based on the TV series. $2.50
The Strangers 17 (Ultraverse; Englehart & Hoberg) The Strangers face Rafferty and one of them *will* die. $1.95
NEW **Strikeback!** (Peterson & Maguire) Bravura series featuring a band of slightly silly superheroes. $2.50
Ultraforce 2 (Jones & Perez + Vey) Prime turns against Ultraforce — he's under Atalon's control. $1.95
Warstrike 6 (Danko & Nguyen) Warstrike versus Rafferty. Will Wrath survive?. $1.95

MARVEL COMICS

SHIPPING OCTOBER 4TH

Beauty and the Beast 4 (Slate & Quartieri) Adapted from the Disney movie. $1.50
Cable 18 (Loeb & Skroce) Cable confronts the erstwhile allies of Mr Sinister, The Dark Riders. $1.95
Captain America 434 (Gruenwald & Hoover + Bulanadi) Continuing the *Fighting Chance* storyline, set to determine the identity of the new Captain America. $1.50
Conan Saga 93 (Thomas & Chaykin + S. Buscema) Sword and swordplay. b&w $2.25
Daredevil 335 (Wright & Grindberg) Daredevil returns to the Underground with Bushwacker hot on his heels. $1.50
Darkhawk 46 (Fingeroth & Smith) Darkhawk is slowly dying of a virus infection. .. $1.50
Groo the Wanderer 119 (Marvel/Epic; Aragones w/Evanier) $2.25
Fantastic Force 2 (Brevoort + Kanterovich & Bastianoni + Cabrera) The Force faces the coming of Moses. $1.75
Namor 57 (Herdling & Isherwood) The battle for the throne of Atlantis continues as Namor confronts his son, Llyron. $1.50
Ren & Stimpy 265 (Slott & Kazaleh) Derived from the animated TV series. $1.95
Spider-Man 2099 #26 (David & ?) The town known as Nightshade unleashes its own monster on Spider-Man. $1.50
Solo 4 (of 4; Fein & Randall) Concluding the series about the mercenary who first appeared in **Amazing Spider-Man**. .. $1.75
Spider-Man 53 (Mackie & Lyle) Continuation of the Spider-clone saga, featuring a guest appearance by Venom. $1.95
Uncanny X-Men 319 (Lobdell & Cruz + Green) Iceman searches for Emma Frost, and her means of manipulating his powers is revealed. ..... $1.50/$1.95
Web of Spider-Man 119 (Kavanagh & Butler + Emberlin) Spider-Man's clone stays in New York, leading him into a confrontation with Venom. $1.50
NEW **Wolverine/Fury: Scorpio Rising** (Chaykin & McManus) A 48-page bookshelf format story following on from the 1990 **Scorpio Connection**. $5.95

SHIPPING OCTOBER 11TH

Amazing Spider-Man 396 (DeMatteis & Bagley + Mahlstedt) Daredevil unites with Spider-Man against the Vulture and the Owl; plus more on the fate of Aunt May — and is Mary Jane pregnant? $1.50
Blackwulf 7 (Herdling & Medina + Anderson) Tantalus's ambitions are revealed. . $1.50
Barbie 48 (Trusiani & DeCesare) More adventures with the blonde bombshell $1.50
NEW **Bishop 1** (of 4; Ostrander & Pacheco + Smith) The time-displaced X-Man's goes solo. $2.95
Conan Classics 7 Reprinting **Conan the Barbarian 7**. $1.50
Force Works 6 (Abnett + Lanning & Taylor + Garcia) Beginning the three-way crossover with **Iron Man** and **War Machine**, featuring the return of the Mandarin. $1.50
Ghost Rider 56 (Ellis & Larroca) Introducing The Next Wave, a band of mercenaries with GR in their sights. $1.95
Guardians of the Galaxy 55 (Gallagher & West + Montano) Ripjack's secret is revealed, along with its ramifications for Peter Parker, the original Spider-Man. $1.50
Marvel Action Hour 2 Featuring The Fantastic Four (Cavalieri & Alcatena) Based on the animated TV series. $2.95/1.50
Marvel Comics Presents 169 (anthology) *Vengeance* (Cooper & Jones); *Mandarin* (Kaminski & Nord); *Century* (Abnett + Lanning & ?); *It* (Dutter & Fonteriz) .. $1.75
The Little Mermaid 4 (Robbins & Wilshire + Hunt) Based on the Disney animation. $1.50
NEW **Nightmare 1** (Nocenti & Bennett) Four-issue series exploring the master of nightmares. . $1.95
Night Thrasher 17 (Busiek & Nichols) Featuring a new band of villains, Field Force, and guest-starring War Machine. ... $1.95
Nova 12 (Marrinan & Marrinan + Stegbauer) Nova versus Nova 0:0, with the Inhumans on the sidelines to offer help. $1.95
Punisher War Zone 34 (Dixon & J Kubert) The Punisher pursues a new heroin supplier based in Russia. $1.95
NEW **Punisher Year One 1** (Abnett + Lanning & Eaglesham) The pre-history of the Punisher is revealed. .. $2.50
Prowler 2 (Potts & Reinhold) Four issue series featuring the Spider-Man supporting cast member. $1.75
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Aladdin 3 (Nordling & Reguard) Adaptation of the Disney feature. $1.75
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Spider-Man Adventures 1 (Yomtov & Saviuk) Based on the animated US TV series. . . . . $2.95/$1.50
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Marvel Action Hour featuring Iron Man 2 (Fein & Williams) Based on the animated TV series. $1.50
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Spectacular Spider-Man 219 (DeFalco & Buscema) Continuing the story from **Amazing Spider-Man** about the new Owl and Vulture combination. $1.50
Thunderstrike 15 (DeFalco & Frenz + Milgrom) Mephisto starts his fight with Thunderstrike by stealing his son's soul. . $1.50
Thunderstrike Double Feature 3 (Thomas & Alexander) As above, with a **Code: Blue** flip book. $2.50
The Vision 2 (Harras & Ross) Four-issue series featuring the android Avenger. $1.75
Warlock and the Infinity Watch 35 (Arcudi & Oliffe) Tyrannus attempts to usurp the Mole Man's position with Warlock. $1.95
What If? 68 (Dixon & Carrasco) What if Captain America had not been released from the arctic ice until today? Part II. . . . $1.50
X-Men 38 (Nicieza & Dodson) Who is the mysterious Mr Milbury, why is Extreme after him and what has this to do with Scott's grandfather.? $1.95/1.50
X-Men 2099 #15 (Moore & Lim) Halloween Jack is back to wreak more havoc on the X-Men team. $1.50

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Dr Strange 72 (Quinn & Gross) The Doctor is back in the Marvel Universe and must fight Salomé for his power. $1.95
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Punisher 2099 #23 (Mills + Skinner & Coleby + Williams) The showdown between Punisher and Hotwire — his own son. $1.50
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Silver Surfer 99 (Marz & Hall) Silver Surfer and Nova are reunited after her supposed death, but is she Nova or some doppelganger dreamt up by Mephisto? $1.50
Spider-Man: The Arachnis Project 5 (Lackey & Wildman) Spider-Man gets involved in a centuries-spanning conspiracy rooted in the Smithsonian Museum. $1.75
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Comics International invites you to submit your comics-related queries, both for your own enlightenment, and that of our general readership.

In answer to lots of enquiries, we haven't received the Bravura limited coupon offer editions from the States yet as we hear they've not been printed. We'll keep you posted.

W. Richards, 35 Ulfgar Rd, Wolvercote, Oxford

CAN you please offer any advice on establishing copyright on a new character or magazine title.

Do such things have to be registered with the patent office?

Okay, here's a layman's guide to a complex legal area: you cannot copyright an idea. You cannot register as an exclusive trade mark a common noun or set of words. That's the down side. I tried to record Marvelman as a registered trade mark many years ago, Warrior too.

But Warrior is a common noun, I couldn't get it past the agent. Marvelman? Two common nouns put together which took longer to check, but still came back as a no.

What you can do is establish use of a character logo, magazine logo, or development of an idea. Until in use, you're not trading with it, so you can't claim any kind of prior right should anybody else use it. Such an ownership-establishing device is popularly known in comics as as "ashcan" edition.

*These have been around since the late 1930s. Fawcett tried it with **Flash Comics** in 1939, but had been beaten by DC. Warren Publications used an ashcan of **House of Horror** in the mid-1970s to put me through a further name change on **House of Hammer's** US edition when the US distributor said the original title sounded too much like a Do-It-Yourself magazine.*

An ashcan edition can have as few as 500 copies printed, but it must be distributed, offered for sale. Then, you can prove commercial use of a concept. Should anybody else then try to use the same concept, you can prove prior usage.

But proving such against bigger companies can be expensive. Also, you can claim that a similar idea or title is passing itself off as yours, attempting to benefit from your sales or reputation. But knowing it and proving it is not the same.

***Captain Marvel** publishers Fawcett spent years defending their character against litigation from the **Superman** publishers, but finally quit when sales proved it wasn't worth continuing the fight.*

So, publish your idea. If necessary give it free to comic shops to get it on sale. Send out review copies. Put it on the map. Then you can submit the idea to a company, establishing that you've done an ashcan as "a market test". If they want your idea, they'll then realise they can't get it without you. *Dez Skinn / Editor*

S. Pelluet, 11 Windlesham Rd, Shoreham, West Sussex

Do you know what happened to Epic Comics' graphic novel of William Gibson's classic **Neuromancer**?

I have Volume One by Tom DeHaven and Bruce Jensen, which has an introduction by Gibson. As it ended approximately a third of the way into the story, I had naturally expected further volumes to complete the adaptation. However, I have never heard anything of them.

I also **Raggedyman** #1, another cyberpunk-ish comic, published by Brave New Words in 1992. It has really great b&w art inside and a cover painting by Bryan Talbot.

I thought it was a very good start, but I've found no mention of it in any guides, and I'm still waiting for #2.

Any (virtual) light you can shed on these queries would be appreciated.

*Unless anybody can correct us, it looks like you've got a full — if somewhat messy — set of both titles. While mainstream comics which suddenly cease often have their plotlines resolved elsewhere (Marvel's **Skull the Slayer** and **Woodgod** stories leap to mind, both being resolved in **Marvel Two-in-One**) it's tricky when you've hardly any other titles, or it isn't your copyright. But take heed, if you find what's happened to you infuriating, what about the legion of non-Japanese-speaking **Akira** fans who were following Marvel's Epic editions?*

Robert Hoffman
16 Lundy Rd, Dronfield, Derbys

AFTER having spent about 18 months tracking down all the key issues, I finally managed to obtain the complete **War of the Gods** saga, *the crossover event of 1991* as it was touted in DC house ads at the time. But tell me, in which order do you read the bloody thing?!

Now, don't you dare refer me to **The Comic Book Price Guide** for their list because that doesn't make sense. It says that it's listed in "chronological order", but if that means it's in the order of release dates I don't know, but it certainly doesn't follow the order of those little numbers at the top of the tie-in covers — right below the **War of the Gods** logo.

Even if you put the comics in that order it doesn't make sense — with some numbers missing altogether! Or is it like **Zero Hour**, where each crossover comic serves as an entry point for the particular character into the mini-series?

Whatever the case, DC Comics did a poor job of marketing this particular crossover. **Eclipso** and **Armageddon 2001** on the other hand were excellent, **Bloodlines** was crap and **Zero Hour** is looking good. But I'd really like to read **War of the Gods** so please, *Q&A*, can you shed any light on this?

Basically, the common perception is that creator George Perez blew his deadlines. It was published out of order, so all the DC links came out wrong. But Perez felt his (intended) Wonder Woman crossover had been hijacked into a multi-character epic, and he left the company in anger. For a back issue read, we welcome anybody's definitive order guide.

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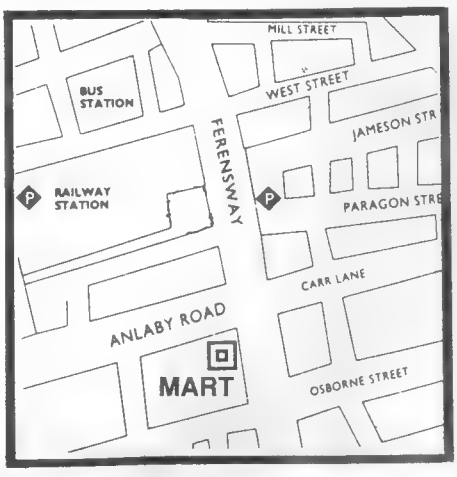

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RETAIL index

Key to abbreviations used

imp	= air imported new issues
back	= back issues stocked
s-p	= small press & fanzines
merch	= videos, trading cards, T-shirts, posters, models, etc
ind	= US independent comics (non-newsstand & manga)
Brit	= British comics & albums
frgn	= foreign language comics
u/g	= underground comics
gn	= graphic novels & trade paperback editions
STO	= standing order service, new comics reserved

CENTRAL LONDON

■ **Acme Comic Shop**, 391 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8LQ (near Brixton tube) Mon-Thur 10-6; Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-6.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, wants lists welcomed) 071-274 6697

■ **Avalon Comics**, 143 Lavender Hill, London SW11. Mon-Thur 10.00-5.45, Fri 10.00-6.30; Sat 9.30-6.00 (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 071-924 3609

■ **The Book Worm Bookshop**, 19 Horner Square, Whitechapel, London. (Within Spitalfields market) Tues-Thurs 10-4.00; Fri 10-6.30; Sun 10-4.00 (back, ind, s-f & horror bks, Brit, phone cards)

■ **Comic Showcase**, 76 Neal St, London WC2. Mon - Wed 10-6; Thurs - Sat 10-7; Sun 12-5 (imp, back s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, cartoon books, original art) 071-240 3664

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 71 New Oxford St, London WC1A 1DG. Mon - Wed + Sat 10-6; Thurs + Fri 10-7 (imp, back s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, film & tv) 071 836 4179

■ **Gosh!** 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1 (opposite British Museum) 10-6 7 days a week inc Bank Hols. Late Thur-Fri til 7 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, largest selection of newspaper strip compilations in UK) 071 636 1011

■ **Mega-City Comics**, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ. Mon-Sun 10-6; late Thurs + Fri to 7. (imp, back, merch, s-p, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, film-tv fantasy, horror, body art, subculture, STO) 071 485 9320

■ **Music and Video Exchange Bookshop**, 56 Notting Hill Gate, London W11. Mon-Sun 10.00-8.00 (back, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, RPG. Buy & exchange all comics) 071 229 8420

■ **Platinum Age Comics/Bayswater Books**, 27 Craven Terrace, Lancaster Gate, London W2 3EL. Mon - Sat 11-7 (but sometimes till midnight!) (back, ind, u/g, general 2nd hand books, search service) 071 402 7398

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Hamleys**, 4th Floor, 188/196 Regent Street, London W1 6BT. Mon-Wed 10-6.30; Thur 10-8; Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-7; Sun 12-6 (imp, back, ind, gn merch, Brit, STO) 071-287 3097

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin Megastore**, 14 Oxford Street, London W1N 9FL. Mon-Sat 9.30-8.00; Sun 12.00-7.00 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, gn, STO) 071-637 4066 (fax 071 637 3966)

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin**, 1st Floor, Virgin Marble Arch, 527-531 Oxford St, London W1. Mon-Wed & Fri 9.30-7.30; Thurs 9.30-8; Sat 9-7.30; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, gn, STO) 071-499 8839

OUTER LONDON

■ **Altered Images**, 6 The Arcade, High St, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1ET. Mon-Wed & Fri 10-5.30; Thurs 10 - 6.30; Sat 9 - 6 (imp, back, ind merch, Brit, gn, STO) 081 770 3815

■ **Andy's Comic Cavern**, Windsor Open Market (back of Woolworth's), Bachelors Acre, Windsor. Sats only 7.30-4.00 (imp, back, ind, gn, STO) Free delivery for Windsor & Slough area. 0753 853381

■ **Atomic Comics**, 1112 High Rd, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 4AH. Mon-Sat 10-6 excl Fri 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, 2nd hand horror fantasy sf bks, original art) 081-597 8547

■ **Calamity Comics**, 160 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2HR. Mon-Wed 10-6, Thurs & Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy tv & film bks & merch, Sega & Nintendo game cartridges, videos) 081-427 3831

■ **Calamity Comics 2**, 90 Queens Road, The Broadway, Watford, Herts WD1 2LA. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; closed Wed; Thurs & Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy tv & film bks & merch, videos) 0923 249293

■ **Comic Shack**, 720 High Road, Leytonstone, London E11 3NN. Mon-Thurs 9.30-5.30; Fri & Sat 9.30-6.30; Sun 11-5.00. Also by appointment (imp, back, s-p, merch, u/g, gn, hbks) 081-539 7260/081-555 9303 (eve)

■ **Dynamic Comics**, Units 43-47 In Shops, 68 Church St, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RB. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, s-p, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, merch) phone & fax 081-681 2597

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs 10-7; Fri 10-8; Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 081-298 1363

■ **Gary's Book & Comic Stall**, Site A65, The High Street, Walthamstow, London E17. Thur + Fri 10-5; Sat 8-5.30. Tube: Walthamstow Central (imp, back, s-p, ind, gn, STO. annuals, children's books)

■ **Heroes Akimbo Comics**, 674 High Rd, Leyton, London E10 6JP. (Tubes: Leyton, Leytonstone, Walthamstow Central) Mon-Sat 9.00-6.00; Sun 10.00-5.00 (imp, back, merch, STO Brit) 081 558 8313

■ **Krypton Komics**, 252 High Rd, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (next to Tesco) Mon-Wed 10-6; Thur-Fri 9.30-7; Sat 9-6. Tube: Seven Sisters Road. (imp, back, s-p, ind, gn, STO) 081-801 5378

■ **Readers Dream**, 100A Harlington Road West, Feltham (near Heathrow airport) Middx TW14 0JJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-6.00 excl Wed - closed (imp, back, gn, STO) 081-844 0780

■ **Skinny Melink's**, 66 Loampit Vale, Lewisham, London SE13. Mon-Thur 11- 6.30 Fri 11-7; Sat 10-6.30; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, ind s-p, u/g, gn, STO) 081-318 0499

■ **South London Book Centre**, 18-19 Stockwell Street, Greenwich, London SE10 9JN. Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat & Sun 9am-5.30pm (imp, back, ind, gn, u/g, 2nd hand & new SF-horror-fantasy novels, art bks, bargain bks, remainders). 081 659 9714 or 081 853 2151

■ **Stateside Comics PLC**, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, Herts EN4 8RF. Mon-Wed 10.00-7.00; Thur-Fri 10.00-8.00; Sat 9.00-6.00; Sun 10.00-3.00 (later by appointment). (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, Brit, frgn, tv-film & fantasy, gn, STO) 081-449 5535

■ **They Walk Among Us**, 32 Union Court, Sheen Rd, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1AA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 excl Fri 9.30-6 (imp, merch, back, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, fantasy/s-f/horror bks, STO, sub-culture) Phone/fax 081 948 8476

■ **30th Century Comics**, Unit 12, Putney Market (1st Floor), Putney Exchange Shopping Centre, Putney High St., London SW15 1TW. Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat 9.00-6.00; Thu 9.00-7.00 (imp, back, ind, gn STO) 081 778 8094

■ **Time Trek**, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1TR. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.30 (late Thurs to 8) (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, sf TV & film related merch, STO) 081 313 0677

■ **Westside Comics**, 392 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0EL. Mon-Sat 10-6, late Thurs-Fri to 6.30. (imp, back, ind, Brit, gn, STO). 081-813 5019

SOUTH EAST

■ **ACE Comics**, 1 Headgate Buildings, St John's Street, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD. Mon - Sat 10.00am - 5.30pm. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts) 0206 561 912

■ **The American Comic Shop**, 1 Church Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4BS (just off High Street). Mon-Sat 9-5.30 ex Fri 9.30-6.00. (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Trek & Star Wars merch, videos) 0634 817410

■ **Cartoon Shop**, Upper Galleries, Eastgate Shopping Centre, Basildon, Essex. Mon - Wed & Sat 10-6, Thurs & Fri 10-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 0268 534194

■ **Cartoon Shop**, 368 Chartwell West, Top Floor, Victoria Circus Shopping Centre, Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, RPG) 0702 613021

■ **Close Encounters**, 196c High St, Slough SO1 1RT (above Curries). Mon-Sat 9.30 - 6.30 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, videos, Trek & Star Wars merch) 0753 571799

■ **The Comic Rocket**, 33 Crescent Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. Mon-Wed 10-4.30, Thur-Fri 10-7.30; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, gn, u/g, STO) 0892 518771

■ **Comic Showcase**, 19-20 St Clements St, Oxford. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, gn, STO) 0865-723680

■ **Comics and Cards**, 84 St Mary Street, Southampton SO1 1NZ. Mon-Sat 8.00-7.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) phone/fax: 0703 235324

■ **David's Comics**, 3 Sydney Street, Brighton, Sussex BN1 4EN. Mon-Fri 9.30-6; Sat 9-6. (imp, back, ind, u/g, Brit, STO, gn, exchange, club discount) 0273 690223

NEW **Fantastic Store Ink**, 14 Gardner St, Brighton BN1 1UP. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-6. (imp, back, ind, s-p, merch, Brit, u/g, STO, original art) 0273 670012

■ **Incognito Comic Shop**, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, Brit, STO, film/tv merch) phone/fax: 0227-785898

■ **Incognito Comic Shop**, 14 Starnes Court, Union St, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. Mon-Fri 10.00 - 5.30; Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, Brit, STO, film/tv related merch) phone/fax: 0622-683642

■ **Renegade Comics**, Unit 11, Elmes Arcade, High Street, Stevenage Old Town, Herts SG1 3EF. Mon -Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, v/g, gn, STO, RPG) 0438 747468

■ **Siegi's Comics & Bags**, Unit 3, 6 Orange St, Canterbury, Kent. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, s-p, ind, merch, Brit, gn, STO, tv SF, gum cards, sf memorabilia) 0227 470840

■ **Slough Computers**, 245 High Street, Slough, Berks SL1 1BN. Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30. (imp, ind, gn, STO, Sega & Nintendo game carts) 0753 521594

■ **Universal Comics**, 16 London Road, Staines. Mon - Fri 10.30 - 6.30, Sat 10 - 6.30. (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, STO) 0784 460300

■ **Whatever Comics**, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits) 0227 453226

■ **Wokingham Comics & Trading Cards**, Wokingham Indoor Market, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham, Berkshire. Sats only (imp, back, ind, merch, gn, STO) 0734 790441

■ **Wonderworld**, 125 Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3SQ. Tues-Sat 10-2, 3-6. (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures) 0705 833 272

■ **Wonderworld**, 133 St Mary Street, Southampton S01 1NX. Tues-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO, FRPG & miniatures) 0703 634658

MIDLANDS

■ **Another World**, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0533 515266

■ **Another World**, 11 Market Street Nottingham. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0602 484122

■ **Arrival Comics & Books**, 2 Broad Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit) 0902-313 660

■ **Bookworm**, Unit 3, 33-39 Tower St, King's Lynn, Norfolk. Mon-Sat 11-4 (back, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, fantasy & sf, early Penguins, general fic & non-fic, records) 0553 760904/771880

■ **Central City Comics**, 4 Eagle Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JB. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit frgn, gn, STO) 0473 233017

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■ **Comics Unlimited**, Unit 11, The Arcade Letchworth, Hertfordshire. Mon - Sat 9.30 - 5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, gn, Brit, u/g, STO, RPG) 0462 480018

■ **Demon Comics**, 102 Eastgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1QT. Mon - Sat 10-6. (imp, back, merch, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, t-shirts, sci-fi models) 0452 330370

■ **Fantasy World**, 10 Market Square Arcade, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1NU Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, frgn, u/g, gn, STO, RPG, rock t-shirts, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 0782 279294 (fax 0782 202381)

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■ **Forbidden Planet**, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, film/ tv material, sf/horror bks) ph/fax 0203 229672

■ **Ground Zero**, 11 Handley Arcade, Mansfield, Notts NG18 1NQ. Mon - Sat 9.00 - 5.00 (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, STO, accessories) 0623 22017

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■ **Nostalgia & Comics**, 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon - Thurs 9.15 - 5.45, Fri + Sat 9.15 - 6.00 (imp, back, merch, gn, ind, s-p, u/g, Brit, STO) 021 643 0143

■ **Planet X**, 5 London Rd, Worcester. Now open Tues-Sat 10.00-6.00, Thurs til 8.00pm. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, STO-monthly) Phone/fax: 0905 355055

■ **Stateside Comics PLC at Virgin**, Virgin Megastore, 1st Floor, 98 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6SX. Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 9-6; Tues 9.30-6; Thurs 9-8. (imp, back, s-p, ind, Brit, tv film & fantasy bks, gn, merch, STO) 021 236 5735 fax 021 236 8153

■ **Time Zone**, 12 Fish Street (off Butcher Row), Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG) 0743 365192

■ **Zoom Comics!!**, Unit 3 Inshops Centre, 65 South Parade, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham B72 1QX Mon-Sat 9.00-5.30. (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, STO) 021 354 7500

NORTH WEST

■ **Arcadia Comics**, 12 Clarence Arcade, Stamford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 7PT. (next to Comet) Mon-Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, ind, horror-sf mags/bks, Who, Trek, ltd merch & gn, STO, ltd toys & figures) 061 339 1816

■ **Arcadia Comics**, 75 Oldham Road, Rochdale, Lancs OL16 5QR Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (excl Tues 3.30 & Sat 5.00 closing) (imp, back, ind, horror-sf mags/bks, Who, Trek, ltd merch, gn, Brit, STO, ltd toys/figures) 0706 713770

■ **Equinox Books**, 50 Bridge Street, Astley Bridge, Bolton, Lancs BL1 2EG. Mon-Sat 10-5.30, Thurs til 8.00 (imp, back, merch, kits, imp, Trek, Who) 0204 593348

■ **Imagination Station**, Unit 28, Portland Shopping Centre, Botchergate, Carlisle, Cumbria CA1 1NT. Mon - Sat 9 - 5.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO)

■ **Odyssey 7**, 21 Hanging Ditch, Corn Exchange Buildings, Manchester M4 3ES. Mon - Sat 9.30am - 5.30pm. (imp, back, sf-fantasy-horror books, postcards, videos, badges, soundtracks, stills, LF filmbooks, Star Trek, Doctor Who) 061 832 7044

■ **Odyssey 7**, Precinct Centre, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9RN. Mon - Sat 9.30am - 5.30pm (imp, back, sf-fantasy-horror novels, postcards, posters, badges, stills, LF film books, Trek, Dr Who, etc) 061 273 6666

■ **Sartori Comics**, The Assembly Rooms, King Street, Lancaster. Thurs-Sat 10.00 - 4.30pm (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, STO) 0524 733943 (after 6pm)

■ **Thunderbooks**, 332 Lytham Rd, Blackpool. 10-5.30 Tues, Thurs-Sat all year; Mon-Sun in season (closed Wed). Out of season open Wed, closed Sun-Mon. (imp, s-p, back, merch, ind, limited u/g, Brit, frgn, kits, gn, t-shirts, media collectors' items) 0253-48321

■ **Thunderbooks II**, 116 Friargate, Preston, Lancs. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, limited u/g, Brit, frgn, gn, kits, t-shirts, media collectors' items) 0772-204287

■ **The Time Tunnel**, 66 Edleston Road, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7HD. Mon - Sat 10.00am - 5.30pm excl Weds. (imp, back, merch, ind, Brit, gn, model kits, toys, action figures, Doctor Who, Star Trek)

■ **Time Zone**, 3 Academy Place, Warrington, Cheshire WA1 2NR. Mon - Sat 10.00 - 6.00. (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, RPG) 0925 651185

■ **Worlds Apart**, Acorn Gallery, 16 Newington (city centre), Liverpool L1 4ED. Mon - Sat (excl Wed) 10-6; Wed 12-6 (imp, back, ind, merch, s-p, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, fantasy film mags) 051 707 0839

NORTH EAST

■ **Armadillo**, 16-22 Anlaby Road, Hull, North Humberside HU1 2PA. Mon-Sat 10-6; late Thur-Fri to 8 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, gn, u/g, STO, videos, ppbks) 0482 29787

■ **Books N' Comics**, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, gn, STO, fantasy gn, film mags, Dr Who, Trek) 0642 249143

■ **Comicville**, Ground Floor, 54 The Arcade, The Piece Hall, Halifax HX1 1RE, Yorkshire. Tures-Fri 9.30-5; Sat 10-5 Sun 11-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, Brit, u/g, gn, STO, model kits, toys, Who, Trek, videos) 0374 482186

■ **Dells Comic Shop**, 5 Duke St, Bradford 1, Yorks. Mon-Sat 9-5 excl Wed 9-3 (imp, back, merch, ind, gn, STO, horror masks, tv fantasy mags) 0274 390 541

■ **Fantasique**, 115 High St West, Sunderland (near Joplins). Mon-Sat 9.30-6.00 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, STO, fantasy bks, manga) Discount cards available. 091 565 4485

■ **Hysteria Comics**, Unit 2, The Arches, Park Road, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS24 7PH. Mon-Sat 9-5 limp, back, s-p, ind, merch, u/g, gn, STO, film mags) 0429 236952

■ **Nu Earth Comics**, 4 Davygate Centre, York Y01 2SU. Mon - Fri 10 - 5.30; Sat 9 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g, Brit, gn, STO, RPG, art bks) 0904 611 461

■ **Nostalgia & Comics**, 12 Matilda, off the Moor, Sheffield, Yorkshire. Mon - Fri 10.00 - 6.00; Sat 9.15 - 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, Brit, u/g, gn, original art, model kits, sf & fantasy gns, horror magazines, newspaper strip compilations) 0742 769475

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As such, the opinions stated do not necessarily reflect those of the publication, and space will be given in subsequent issues to opposing views. Editing of accepted manuscripts will be done only as a matter of grammar, clarity and space consideration.

Looking beyond the hype

Comment by Alan Dempsey, Birkenhead, Merseyside

WHAT a strange hobby! Honestly, have you ever encountered a pastime like ours? I have been collecting comics for something like 23 years in one form or another, and *still* this hobby can have me shaking my head in disbelief.

"How so?", you may ask. Well, there I was arguing the merits of Image (well, actually, arguing the lack thereof). The comic in question was **Spawn**. The argument of the young lad in question was that if **Spawn** is so bad, why is it always near the top of the **Comics International** Top 50?

In return, I answered him with another question. I asked him simply this: "What happened in the last issue of **Spawn**?" The look on his face was priceless as he tried (read; struggled woefully) to describe an issue he so obviously hadn't read.

After a minute or two of embarrassed spluttering he had to admit that, okay, he hadn't actually read the issue in question, but had in fact took it home and had (you guessed it) bagged and boarded the offending item (should that read offensive item?!). That there was exactly the reason why **Spawn** and **WildC.A.T.s** for that matter, feature regularly in the **Comics International** top 10. Too many people buying too many copies of comics they won't even read or derive any pleasure from.

He then tried to turn the argument his way by trying to fall back on that favoured saviour of the speculator: worth and money. He said that his issue of **Spawn** was likely to be worth much more than whatever it was I had in my bag (a *very* highly contentious point seeing as the comic in my bag was a copy of **Bone**, Jeff Smith's seminal creation which had rocketed him to comic superstardom and deservedly so. However, I let this ride so as not to dilute the gist of my argument.)

"Ah, yes", I said. "But my intention is to take this comic home and *read* it. If it's not worth anything this time next year then I won't be any poorer." Alas, this point seemed to be lost on the young chap. He honestly believed that in ten years he was going to sell his comic collection (which apparently included nine copies of **Spawn** #1 and other "hard-to-get" issues like **Youngblood** #1, **X-Force** #1 and **X-Men** #1) and would then retire to the Caribbean.

I then asked him if he had yet tried to sell any of his **Spawn** #1s? In return he gave me a look that suggested he thought I had, in fact, gone quite mad. I suggested that the next time there was a comic mart in Liverpool, he should travel down with his **Spawn** #1s in tow and offer them to the dealers. After all, if they're worth the £7-10 he believes them to be, he should have dealers queueing up to buy from him this "hot" future commodity.

I tried to explain to him that most dealers are sitting on boxes of **Spawn** #1s and **WildC.A.T.s** #3 with coupon, or whatever. I even challenged him. I challenged him to put his **Spawn** and **Shadowhawk** back on the rack and pick up something that might just stimulate the old grey matter. Or even just might make him smile. I suggested **Bone**, **Sin City**, **A Distant Soil**, or if he needed to get a fix of superheroes (and God knows we all do from time to time) to try a copy of **Legends of the Dark Knight** or even **The Flash**. Deep? Thoughtful? Philosophical? Not really, no. But Mark Waid of **The Flash** crafts as good a superhero story as I've read in the past ten years. Well paced and a fun read.

And them's the words aren't they? "Fun" and "Read". Two words that you would have thought were synonomous with a hobby like ours, but which seem to have become lost along the way and replaced by words such as "speculate" and "investment" and "hot".

"Then why," said the young chap, "is the shop counter full of Image if they're so crap?

"Because you buy them", I replied. If people stopped buying this garbage, and people stopped being dictated to by magazines like **Wizard** as to what's "hot", then comic shops would stop ordering it. We ended our conversation with me suggesting that the young man read things that I honestly thought would open his eyes to the potential of storytelling that can only be conveyed, with any aplomb, in comic form.

I suggested he read Miracleman's first encounter with Johnny Bates, but to do it when it was dark outside and was raining and windy (now, there's atmosphere). I also suggested **V for Vendetta**, **Love and Rockets**, the first 12 issues of **American Flagg** (Vol 1) and **Zot**.

I even suggested for superheroes done right he should try **The Dark Knight Returns**, **Batman: Year One** and **Daredevil** 227-234, all by Frank Miller. Of course, he probably just thought of me as an old fart with a bee in his bonnet. He's probably right, too!

It's just that when I look back to my early comic collecting years, I fondly remember O'Neil and Adams

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WHO'S MR. BIG, ANYWAY? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF HIM!
I THINK HE'S WITH IMAGE! IF HE'S NOT, HE WILL BE BY THE TIME WE GET TO THE END OF THIS QUEUE!!
DOESN'T IT MAKE YOUR HEART SWELL WITH PRIDE TO SEE THE MASSED RANKS OF FANDOM ASSEMBLED TO KNOW THAT, LIKE THE INDUSTRY WE LOVE, WE HAVE GROWN AND MATURED!
MR BIG
GARY'S BEEN READING FAR TOO MUCH STAN LEE!
TO THINK THAT COMICS AND THOSE WHO READ THEM WERE ONCE RIDICULED AS WORTHLESS AND INFANTILE! WHAT STRIDES WE HAVE MADE IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF THIS ART FORM.
FAN-BOY.
IN HONOUR OF MR. BIG, I THINK I'LL ASK HIM TO SIGN THIS COMIC. TO A FELLOW AFFICIONADO OF THE COMIC ART MEDIUM.
GOD THAT! I'M GOING TO ASK HIM TO SIGN IT TWICE!
WHY?
ONE TO READ, AND ONE TO KEEP, OF COURSE!!
8 HOURS TO NEXT CHECKPOI
ARGH!!
SCRIPT BY GARY OCHILTREE
ART BY TONY LEE.

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Batman, Jim Starlin's run on **Warlock**, and those funky **Brave and Bold** and **World's Finest** team-ups, not to mention the annual team-up of the JSA and the JLA. Okay, they may not be literary classics, and they're not going to scoop any Nobel prizes, but they were a *fun read*.

When this lad grows up, he's going to have memories of being offered £15 for six boxes of "hot" Image and **X-Men** comics that he never even read.

You can't help but wonder if thousands of kids haven't missed out on something because they were one of the 300,000 **Wizard** readers with £ signs in their eyes, chasing **Wizard**'s latest "Hot Pick", when all the time **Wizard** should have been saying, "This isn't going to be worth anything, there's 1.5 million of them, for Christ's sake! Do yourself a favour and sample a few titles. Who knows, you might even *like* them!"

Remember, something becomes valuable because more people want a copy than there are people selling a copy. *Not* because a publisher tells you it will be. The moral of this tale is, as always: Buy what *you* like, and *read* what you buy.

Impressing the press

Comment by Iain Simmons, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts.

RECENTLY - I'm sure you all saw it - a man bought for his eight year old son a copy of **Action Comics** #1, paying £14,300. Now just remembering my own attitude towards comics at such a tender age (the child's that is, not the father's), and my early yearnings towards editing (which usually involved a blunt pair of scissors) he was taking an enormous risk. However, he only gave the comic to his kid for a quick photo session, then locked it away in a vault. (It was, after all, an *investment*.)

If I'd just spent a small fortune on 36 pages of hot Superman action, I would have locked the kid in the vault and brought up the comic as the precious and beloved product of my loins. Nonetheless, the child is free and no-one is able to even touch the comic.

But, of course, you all know about this, don't you? You read it in the paper. Even watched it on the TV news. It was, after all, quite widely reported. I don't mind that but what makes me want to vomit was the style of reportage it received.

Everybody was harping on about the fact that this guy spent over £14,000 on a comic which means comics are worth money and we should all be out there buying them.

I don't know about you but I find all this falling on our knees and praying to Mammon not only distasteful to an extreme, but also incredibly awful publicity for comics. Once more we are trying to excuse our foibles by saying "Yes, well, it might be a tad childish, but comics are worth lots of money. Just look at that Mr. Carr and his son." Thus failing to realise that all this story means, despite what else we say, is that *that* comic, that specific copy of **Action Comics** #1 is worth a lot of money to Mr. Carr and perhaps one or two other people who bid against him.

It doesn't mean that your crumpled copy of **Spawn** #3 is now worth enough for you to be able to purchase Milton Keynes! Still we huddle together convincing ourselves that this is "good press".

A further case in point, which might have passed you by, is the report on **Holy Cross** that appeared less than a month later. (For those who are pedantic enough to want to know it was in **The Guardian**, on 22-08-94.) It filled more or less half the page, describing a comic about Northern Ireland, and attempting to argue about how "adult" comics have become.

To be fair it almost works, the reporter is fairly sympathetic and Malachy Coney, the author of the new comic, puts across a convincing argument. Where does it go wrong? The accompanying photograph, which is roughly twice the size of the text, showed Mr Coney standing in front of a wall of back issues, mostly **X-Men**. The effect being two-fold, once more perpetrating the myth of "comics as an investment", whilst also sending out a message, to anyone who might not know better, that **X-Men** comics are just the sort of intelligent, adult type comics talked about therein.

Would you say that was good press? If you like **X-Men**, then yes. But I've yet to meet a post pubescent **X-Men** fan. That doesn't exactly promote our "cause" does it?

Yet we seem to be courting this sort of press, under the misguided belief that any publicity has to be good publicity. If that's true, why did David Mellor have to resign?

Not because he was a bumbling incompetent, who was useless at his job, but because he'd got involved in the Arts at a much more grass roots level than was necessary and had the misfortune to do it in front of a group of reporters. I'm sure he's more likely to agree that no news is good news.

We need to be saying to these reporters that we are not collecting comics because they might be worth a few bob in later years, or that we are simply being nostalgic. We should be honest and truthful, no matter how foreign those concepts are to your average journalist. Tell them that you read comics because you like them. Tell them that they are a fairly immediate and occasionally intelligent medium for new ideas and stories. Use big words, to show how educated you are. Point out that they are, on the whole, less brain-numbing than *Neighbours* and more cheerful than *Eastenders*. Tell them you collect comics because they are *fun*.

After all, which is more likely to get comics accepted into the wider frame of literature? A large article

in **The Sun** with Grant Morrison and Mark Millar lolling around in a sports car, bragging about how much money they earn, or a small but good review of **The Complete Cursed Earth** collection in the paperback reviews section of **The Guardian**?

Anyway, while you think about it, I'm off to try and flog my **Batman** collection to a small group of gullible reporters.

The importance of being Hergé

Comment by Mike Kidson, Liverpool.

I DIDN'T see the Channel 4 *Opening Shots* broadcast devoted to **Tintin** (covered in **Comics International** #46, *Mediafile*) but if it informed the public that Hergé began work on Tintin in 1939 it was making a grave error. The correct date is 1929.

This isn't a matter of "train-potting", because if Tintin had begun just before WWII, Northern European comics would be very different today.

Tintin in the Land of the Soviets, published in **Le Petit Vingtieme** during 1929-1930, was important in two respects other than being the beginning of an unparallelled creative achievement.

The first was Hergé's decision to confine the text to speech and thought bubbles, without recourse to the then- accepted method of accompanying each panel with a few lines of explanatory prose.

He was almost the first European cartoonist to make the crucial step of transforming narrative comics from prose stories with accompanying pictures to pictorial stories with integrated dialogue.

This was done many years after the American cartoonists, but several years before DC Thomson's Dudley D. Watkins (of Oor Wullie and The Broons fame) took the same step in Britain: and the enormous popularity of the Tintin strip ensured others followed his lead.

Just as significant was the decision taken by the **Vingtieme**'s editor, Norbert Wallez, to reprint the strip immediately in book format and *keep* it in print, a policy maintained with subsequent Tintin stories.

Like all entrepreneurs, Wallez merely intended to increase the profitability of a promising asset by selling it twice and keeping it before the public's attention. Again, though, the success of Tintin ensured that the reprinting of strips in book format became standard practice on the continent.

As Roger Sabin has pointed out, this was important in establishing a divergence between the development of comics on the Continent and in Britain.

For one thing, the Continental respect for creators' rights ensured that artists received royalties from reprint sales: this made it possible for aspiring creators to make a good living from their work.

To appreciate the importance of this, just compare Hergé's career with that of Frank Hampson. Both were creatively innovative, both employed teams of collaborative artists, both experienced creative difficulties and were frequently at odds with their publishers: but Hergé was a wealthy man whereas Hampson, once he'd been fired by Odhams, was left with no rights in **Dan Dare** and no source of income.

But the constant reappearance of Continental strips in hardback volumes also profoundly affected the public's perception of comics.

It imbued the medium with respectability by transforming it from something ephemeral, to be discarded, to something durable and therefore of lasting interest.

"Respectability" is not necessarily intrinsic to comics: nevertheless, it was instrumental in the development of a European publishing culture which has proved receptive to adult themes and creative experimentation. Between 1930 and the outbreak of war, this culture had the time to become established. Had Tintin first appeared just before the war, it would surely not have done so, leaving European comics the throwaway juvenile they are still regarded as here.

Why have I bothered to spin a couple of columns' worth of print out of what in all probability is a typing error? Because I think it's worth establishing the context of another comics culture within which to consider our own.

The comparative failure of the *graphic novel* has demonstrated that it may not be possible, at this late a date, to widen the British audience for comics by publishing bound volumes. But, if nothing else, an understanding of the history of Northern European comics does remind us that it *is* possible for comics to be taken seriously, that adult comics other than **Viz** *can* be taken seriously.

Editor's note: When submitting pieces for Comment, *readers are reminded to make their points clear, concise and of general interest.*

Personal rebuttals to previously published comments will only be considered for publication if they are of interest to the majority of readers and fully explain their context. As such they should clearly reintroduce subjects rather than merely refer to their existance in an earlier ***Comics International.***

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COMICS ECONOMICS

The direct sale market now represents over 85% of US comics publishers sales revenue. The following shows the top titles ordered through the four leading UK & US direct sales distributors. As such it does not reflect retail sales, but instead total orders placed by traders anticipating their retail sales three months ahead. *compiled by Phil Hall*

Direct Market trade order charts: September '94 titles

Titan Distributors (UK) Top 50 Titles

1	Generation X #1 ($3.95)	Marvel	26	Action Comics 704 ($1.50)	DC
2	Spawn 25 ($1.95)	Image	27	Adventures/Superman 517 ($1.50)	DC
3	X-Men 38 ($1.95)	Marvel	28	Lobo 10 ($1.95)	DC
4	Uncanny X-Men 318 ($1.95)	Marvel	29	ClanDestine 2 ($1.95)	Marvel
5	Sandman 64 ($1.95)	DC	30	Spider-Man 52 ($2 95)	Marvel
6	WildC.A.T.s 14 ($2.50)	Image	31	Excalibur 83 ($1.95)	Marvel
7	Batman 512 ($1.50)	DC	32	Maxx 11.($1.95)	Image
8	Wetworks 3 ($2.50)	Image	33	Deadpool II #4 ($2 00)	Marvel
9	Legends/Dark Knight 65 ($1.95)	DC	34	Robin 11 ($1.50)	DC
10	Wolverine 87 ($1.95)	Marvel	35	Catwoman 10 ($1.75)	DC
11	X-Force 40 ($1.95)	Marvel	36	X-Men 38 ($1.50)	Marvel
12	Previews vol 4 #9 ($2.00)	Diamond	37	Hellshock 3 ($2.50)	Image
13	Detective Comics 679 ($1.50)	DC	38	Spider-Man 2099 #25 ($1.50)	Marvel
14	X-Factor 108 ($1.50)	Marvel	39	Books of Magic 7 ($1.95)	DC
15	Hellblazer 83 ($1.95)	DC	40	Cable 17 ($1.95)	Marvel
16	Shadow of the Bat 32 ($1.95)	DC	41	Judge Dredd 4 ($1.95)	DC
17	Incredible Hulk 423 ($1.50)	Marvel	42	Daredevil 334 ($1.50)	Marvel
18	X-Men 2099 #14 ($1.50)	Marvel	43	Uncanny X-Men 318 ($1.50)	Marvel
19	Cyberforce 8 ($1.95)	Image	44	Fantastic Four 394 ($1.50)	Marvel
20	Martha Washington 5 (2.50)	Dark Horse	45	Spect Spider-Man 218 ($1.50)	Marvel
21	Amazing Spider-Man 395 (2.95)	Marvel	46	Web of Spider-Man 118 ($1.50)	Marvel
22	Batman: Madness ($4.95)	DC	47	Force Works 5 ($1.50)	Marvel
23	Superman 94 ($1.50)	DC	48	Stormwatch 15 ($1.95)	Image
24	Fantastic Force 1 ($2.95)	Marvel	49	Superboy 10 ($1.50)	DC
25	Superman Man of Steel 38 ($1.50)	DC	50	Deathblow 9 ($1.95)	Image

First Choice Wholesale (UK) Top 50 Titles

1	Generation X #1 ($3.95)	Marvel	26	X-Force 40 ($1.95)	Marvel
2	Sandman 64 ($1.95)	DC	27	Catwoman 15 ($1.50)	DC
3	Spawn 25 ($1.95)	Image	28	X-Factor 108 ($1.50)	Marvel
4	Uncanny X-Men 318 ($1.95)	Marvel	29	Lobo 10 ($1.95)	DC
5	X-Men 38 ($1.95)	Marvel	30	Judge Dredd 4 ($1.95)	DC
6	Batman 512 ($1.50)	DC	31	Robin 11 ($1.50)	DC
7	Detective Comics 679 ($1.50)	DC	32	Superman 94 ($1.50)	DC
8	Hellblazer 83 ($1.95)	DC	33	Action Comics 704 ($1.50)	DC
9	Wetworks 3 ($1.95)	Image	34	Starman 1 ($1 95)	DC
10	Shadow of the Bat 32 ($1.95)	DC	35	Cable 17 ($1 95)	Marvel
11	Wolverine 87 ($1.95)	Marvel	36	Deadpool II #4 ($2.00)	Marvel
12	Vertigo Rave ($1.95)	DC	37	Cyberforce 8 ($1.95)	Image
13	Legends/Dark Knight 65 ($1.95)	DC	38	Daredevil 334 ($1.50)	Marvel
14	Hellshock 3 ($1.95)	Image	39	Force Works 5 ($1.50)	Marvel
15	ClanDestine 2 ($1.95)	Marvel	40	Shadows Fall 1 ($2.50)	DC
16	Hulk 423 ($1.50)	Marvel	41	Man of Steel 38 ($1.50)	DC
17	Amazing Spider-Man 395 ($1.95)	Marvel	42	Adventures/Superman 517 ($1.50)	DC
18	Spider-Man 52 ($1.95)	Marvel	43	Fantastic Four 394 ($1.50)	Marvel
19	Invisibles 3 ($1.95)	DC	44	Geberation X ashcan (75c)	Marvel
20	Web of Spider-Man 118 ($1.50)	Marvel	45	Excalibur 83 ($1 95)	Marvel
21	Books of Magic 7 ($1.95)	DC	46	X-Men 2099 #14 ($1.50)	Marvel
22	Spect Spider-Man 218 ($1.50)	Marvel	47	Spider-Man 2099 #25 ($2.95)	Marvel
23	Fantastic Force 1 ($2.50)	Marvel	48	Maxx 11 ($1.95)	Image
24	Vamps 4 ($1.95)	DC	49	Deep Space 9 #14 ($1.95)	Malibu
25	Savage Dragon 13 ($1.95)	Image	50	Martha Washington 5 ($2.50)	Dk Horse

Diamond Distributors (US) Top 50 Titles

1	Generation X #1 ($3.95)	Marvel	26	Shadow of the Bat 32 ($1.95)	DC
2	Spawn 25 ($1.95)	Image	27	Shadowhawk 0 ($2.50)	Image
3	X-Men 38 ($1.95)	Marvel	28	Wetworks Sourcebook 1 ($2.50)	Image
4	Uncanny X-Men 318 ($1.95)	Marvel	29	Fantastic Force 1 ($2.50)	Marvel
5	Wetworks 3 ($1.95)	Image	30	Stormwatch 15 ($1.95)	Image
6	Wolverine 87 ($1.95)	Marvel	31	Robin 11 ($1.50)	DC
7	WildC.A.T.s 14 ($2.50)	Image	32	Catwoman 15 ($1.50)	DC
8	Batman 512 ($1.50)	DC	33	Maxx 11 ($1.95)	Image
9	Cyberforce 8 ($1.95)	Image	34	Web of Spider-Man 118 ($1.50)	Marvel
10	Superman 94 ($1.50)	DC	35	Deadpool II #4 ($2.00)	Marvel
11	Superman Man of Steel 38 ($1.50)	DC	36	Spect Spider-Man 218 ($1.50)	Marvel
12	Action Comics 704 ($1.50)	DC	37	Superboy 9 ($1.50)	DC
13	X-Force 40 ($1.95)	Marvel	38	Doom's IV #3 ($2.50)	Image
14	Adventures/Superman 512 ($1.50)	DC	39	Green Lantern 56 ($1.50)	DC
15	Detective Comics 679 ($1.50)	DC	40	Cable 17 ($1.95)	Marvel
16	X-Factor 108 ($1.50)	Marvel	41	Incredible Hulk 423 ($1.50)	Marvel
17	Youngblood 9 ($2 50)	Image	42	Deathblow 9 ($1.95)	Image
18	Amazing Spider-Man 395 ($1.50)	Marvel	43	Excalibur 83 ($1.95)	Marvel
19	Prophet 7 ($2.50)	Image	44	Sandman 64 ($1.95)	DC
20	WildC.A.T.s Adventures 1 ($1.95)	Image	45	Fantastic Four 394 ($2.95)	Marvel
21	Badrock & Co 1 ($2.50)	Image	46	Beavis & Butt-Head 9 ($1.95)	Marvel
22	X-Men 2099 #14 ($1.50)	Marvel	47	Spider-Man 2099 #25 ($2.95)	Marvel
23	Hellshock 3 ($1.95)	Image	48	Codename Strykeforce 7 ($1.95)	Image
24	Spider-Man 52 ($1.95)	Marvel	49	Team Youngblood 13 ($2.50)	Image
25	Legends/Dark Knight 65 ($1.95)	DC	50	Venom/Vengeance 4 ($2.95)	Marvel

Capital City Distribution (US) Top 50 Titles

1	Generation X 1 ($3.95)	Marvel	26	WildC.A.T.s Adventures 1 ($1.95)	Image
2	X-Men 38 ($2.95)	Marvel	27	Spect Spider-Man 218 ($2.95)	Marvel
3	Uncanny X-Men 318 ($2 95)	Marvel	28	Legends/Dark Knight 65 ($1.95)	DC
4	Spawn 25 ($1.95)	Image	29	Wetworks Sourcebook ($2.50)	Image
5	Wolverine 87 ($1.95)	Marvel	30	Shadow of the Bat 32 ($1.95)	DC
6	Wetworks 3 ($2.50)	Image	31	Robin 11 ($1.50)	DC
7	WildC.A.T.s 14 ($2.50)	Image	32	Shadowhawk 0 ($2.50)	Image
8	X-Force 40 ($2.95)	Marvel	33	Deadpool II #4 ($2.00)	Marvel
9	Cyberforce 8 ($1.95)	Image	34	Stormwatch 15 ($1.95)	Image
10	Batman 512 ($1.50)	DC	35	Cable 17 ($1.95)	Marvel
11	Amazing Spider-Man 395 ($2.95)	Marvel	36	Maxx 11 ($1.95)	Image
12	X-Factor 108 ($2.95)	Marvel	37	Catwoman 15 ($1.50)	DC
13	Superman 94 ($1.50)	DC	38	Excalibur 83 ($3.50)	Marvel
14	Superman Man of Steel 38 ($1.50)	DC	39	Beavis & Butt-Head 9 ($1.95)	Marvel
15	Action Comics 704 ($1.50)	DC	40	Green Lantern 56 ($1.50)	DC
16	Adventures/Superman 517 ($1.50)	DC	41	Superboy 9 ($1.50)	DC
17	Spider-Man 52 ($3.95)	Marvel	42	Hulk 423 ($1.50)	Marvel
18	Detective Comics 679 ($1.50)	DC	43	Sandman 64 ($1.95)	DC
19	Fantastic Force 1 ($2.50)	Marvel	44	Fantastic Four 394 ($1.50)	Marvel
20	Web of Spider-Man 118 ($2.95)	Marvel	45	Deathblow 9 ($1.95)	Image
21	Youngblood 9 ($2.50)	Image	46	Badrock & Co 1 ($2.50)	Image
22	Prophet 7 ($2.50)	Image	47	Doom's IV #3 ($2.50)	Image
23	X-Men 2099 #14 ($1.50)	Marvel	48	Venom/Vengeance 4 ($2.95)	Marvel
24	Hellshock 3 ($1.95)	Image	49	Spider-Man 2099 #25 ($2.95)	Marvel
25	Savage Dragon 13 ($1.95)	Image	50	Team Youngblood 13 ($2 50)	Image

Comics International Top 50: September 1994

WHILE the facing page's charts for the two major US distributors and their UK equivalents throw up interesting differences between buying trends in each country, to overview the total ordering, **Comics International** produces its own top fifty chart. The only combined chart in the industry.

Taking the order levels from each company and factoring in the size of each operation, we are able to produce a chart reflecting the entire month with far greater accuracy than those produced for the record, film or book industry.

As always, this represents the trade orders for titles — meaning retailers believe they can sell the books they are ordering. Whether consumers choose to buy them is a different matter. (Key: re = re-entry)

1	(new)	Generation X #1 ($3.95)	Marvel
2	(=)	Spawn 25 ($1.95)	Image
2=	(1)	X-Men 38 ($2.95/$1.50)	Marvel
4	(3)	Uncanny X-Men 318 ($2.95/$1.50)	Marvel
5	(4)	Wetworks 3 ($1.95)	Image
6	(5)	Wolverine 87 ($1.95/$1.50)	Marvel
7	(8)	WildC.A.T.s 14 ($2.50)	Image
8	(21)	Cyberforce 8 ($1.95)	Image
9	(7)	Batman 512 ($1.50)	DC
10	(17)	X-Force 40 ($1.50/$1.95)	Marvel
11	(9)	Superman 94 ($1.50)	DC
12	(10)	Superman Man of Steel 38 ($1.50)	DC
13	(11)	Action Comics 704 ($1.50)	DC
14	(12)	Adventures of Superman 517 ($1.50)	DC
15	(22)	X-Factor 108 ($1.50/$1.95)	Marvel
16	(27)	Amazing Spider-Man 395 ($2.95)	Marvel
17	(15)	Detective Comics 679 ($1.50)	DC
18	(26)	Youngblood 9 ($2.50)	Image
19	(34)	Spider-Man 52 ($2.95)	Marvel
20	(24)	Prophet 7 ($2.50)	Image
21	(new)	WildC.A.T.s Adventures 1 ($1.95)	Image
22	(29)	X-Men 2099 #14 ($1.50)	Marvel
23	(32)	Hellshock 3 ($1.95)	Image
24	(35)	Web of Spider-Man 118 ($2.95)	Marvel
25	(33)	Fantastic Force 1 ($2.50)	Marvel
26	(16)	Batman: Shadow of the Bat 32 ($1.95)	DC
27	(new)	Wetworks Sourcebook ($2.50)	Image
28	(re)	Shadowhawk 0 ($2.50)	Image
29	(39)	Spectacular Spider-Man 218 ($2.95)	Marvel
30	(27)	Legends of the Dark Knight 65 ($1.95)	DC
31	(37)	Stormwatch 15 ($1.95)	Image
32	(23)	Robin 11 ($1.50)	DC
33	(new)	Badrock and Company 1 ($2.50)	Image
34	(30)	Catwoman 15 ($1.50)	DC
35	(40)	Deadpool II #4 ($2.00)	Marvel
36	(=)	Maxx 11 ($1.95)	Image
37	(25)	Cable 17 ($3.50)	Marvel
38	(28)	Excalibur 83 ($3.50)	Marvel
39	(20)	Green Lantern 56 ($1.50)	DC
40	(31)	Superboy 9 ($1.50)	DC
41	(46)	Incredible Hulk 423 ($1.50)	Marvel
42	(re)	Sandman 64 ($1.95)	DC
43	(=)	Beavis & Butt-Head 9 ($1.95)	Marvel
44	(47)	Fantastic Four 394 ($1.50)	Marvel
45	(41)	Doom's IV #3 ($2.50)	Image
46	(44)	Deathblow 9 ($1.95)	Image
47	(re)	Savage Dragon 13 ($1.95)	Image
48	(re)	Spider-Man 2099 #25 ($2.95)	Marvel
49	(re)	Venom: Nights of Vengeance 4 ($2.95)	Marvel
50	(re)	Team Youngblood 13 ($2.50)	Image

Marvel Comics retained its market lead by taking 40% of the chart. The company also retained the top spot with its latest mutant launch **Generation X**, a title which may well remain in the top five for a number of months.

The positions just below are closer than ever this month, with **X-Men** losing the top spot, but tying with **Spawn**, without the aid of its $1.50 edition, which charted at #100 despite being virtually the same comic. **Uncanny X-Men** holds #4, while **Wolverine** dropped one place in a real sales tangle with **Wetworks** (see General Analysis, below)

The other X-books had indifferent effects on the chart. **Cable** stopped its temporary climb and plunged down 12 places. **Excalibur** also fell, by 10 places, while **X-Factor** and **X-Force** both moved up the charts.

X-Men 2099 #14 moved in the opposite direction to past months and climbed 7 places to #22 while **Deadpool** moved back up the chart by five places as his mini-series concluded.

About **Fantastic Force** #1: no, we haven't made an error. It is in the chart for the second consecutive month, as it was resolicited. Interestingly enough, it bettered last month's "new entry" by 8 places. Let's hope this doesn't start a resolicitation trend!

The Hulk #423 moved back up the charts to #41 and **Fantastic Four** also consolidated its recent improved showing by moving up three.

The **Spider-Man** family of titles has been bolstered by the "Return of the Clone" storyline, and all Spider-titles are showing very well.

But **ClanDestine** did not place, due to no listing in Diamond's 100.

Image Comics 32% showing in the chart is a 4% rise on last month after a 4% rise the previous month. The *Image X* gimmick, despite the founders reservations, has apparently proved to be more of a success than at first believed. Even **Shadowhawk** has returned to the charts after a six month absence.

The three Image fallers are **Wetworks**, **Dooms IV** and **Deathblow**, with the latter two getting close to dropping out of the top 50. This was balanced out with three titles re-entering the chart, **Shadowhawk**, **Team Youngblood** (after a three month absence) and **Savage Dragon**, after a skip month. The **Maxx** is a non-mover.

WildC.A.T.s, (by Erik Larsen), **Stormwatch**, **Youngblood** (by Jim Valentino), **Cyberforce** (by Todd McFarlane), **Prophet** and **Hellshock** all moved up the charts.

Wetworks Sourcebook, **WildC.A.T.s Adventures** and **Badrock and Company** were all new entries, with the animated adventures of Jim Lee's superhero team placing the best at #21.

DC Comics has lost ground on the other two market leaders as the interest generated by **Zero Hour** begins to fade. Sales on issue #0s increased during Zero Month as DC increased the print runs on a number of books because of retail demand. Second prints are planned. But now that numbering has returned to normal, there is a marked drop in the number of titles in the top 100, hence the overall position.

The Bat books and Superman family all lost ground in general, but both have just concluded mammoth story arcs and a lull in their performances is expected.

No DC title in the top 50 climbed although **Sandman** re-entered the chart in its highest ever position of #42.

The titles which actually launched with issue zeros last month have all performed equally as well by charting in the lower reaches of the top 100, but many other "top 100 for a month" DCs have slipped out.

Of all of DC's droppers only the Superman family of titles performance was noteworthy. Despite Marvel's new mutant title and *Image X month*, all four Super-books only fell by two places each.

General analysis: The top six positions were incredibly close, here is an indication of just how tight at the top it was with the actual combined scores the books received.

1	Generation X #1 (Marvel)	9550
2=	Spawn 25 (Image)	9222
2=	X-Men 38 (Marvel)	9222
4	Uncanny X-Men 318 (Marvel)	9057
5	Wetworks 3 (Image)	8653
6	Wolverine 87 (Marvel)	8651
7	WildC.A.T.s 14 (Image)	7850

For the first time ever in the *Comics Economics* chart no publisher apart from Marvel, Image and DC has managed to place in the top 50. The closest challenger was Harris's **Vengeance of Vampirella** (which may lose its speculator appeal as print runs increase).

Popular titles which failed to generate enough sales for the top 50:

From Marvel: **Force Works** #5, **Daredevil** #334, **Marvel Action Hour: Fantastic Four** #1, **Marvel Action Hour: Iron Man** #1 and **Vision** #1.

From DC: **Batman Madness**, **Guardians of Metropolis** #1, **Metropolis S.C.U** #1, **Primal Force** #1, **Starman** #1, **Manhunter** #1, **Fate** #1, **R.E.B.E.L.S '94** #1, **Vertigo Rave**, **Flash** and **JLA**.

From Image: **Shadowhawk** #13, **Supreme** #19, **Bloodstrike** #14,

continued overleaf...

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continued from previous page

Newmen #6, **Youngblood Strikefile** #7, **Brigade** #12, **Codename: Strykeforce** #7 and **Freak Force** #9.

From Dark Horse: **Star Wars: Droids** #6 and **Martha Washington Goes to War** #5 (though both chart in the 100).

Malibu Comics: failed to chart with any title in the 100.

Harris and Crusade both charted in the top 100. Harris's **Vengeance of Vampirella** #5 reached a new high of #52 and **Shi** is at #57.

Bongo: is still placing its small selection of titles in the top 75.

Valiant: has only two titles in the top 100, **Ninjak** and **X-O Manowar**.

Overview: Ups, Downs and Outs

Titles that dropped out of the chart this month (not including one-shots and concluded mini-series):

	issue #	last month	this month
Steel	9	(45)	58
Lobo	10	(49)	69
Clandestine	2	(50)	80

Okay, comic-watchers, here's the summary...

Titles rising: 17
Titles falling: 20
New entries: 4
Re-entries: 6
Non-movers: 3

Highest new entry . . . . . **Generation X** #1 (Marvel)
Highest climber . . . . . **Spider-Man** #52 (Marvel) up 15 places
Biggest drop . . . . . **Green Lantern** #19 (DC) down 19 places
Highest re-entry . . . . . **Shadowhawk** #0 (Image)
Longest time between chart entries **Shadowhawk** 6 months (Image)

Most appearances in top ten:

X-Men & Uncanny X-Men (13 months); **Spawn** (11 months; including the Batman Adamtrap) have never featured outside top ten.

Thirteen month breakdown:

% = number of titles in top 50

	#35	#36	#37	#38	#39	#40	#41	#42	#43	#44	#45	#46	#47
Marvel	36	34	34	38	44	40	43	48	38	38	34	42	40
DC	20	18	18	26	26	28	30	32	32	32	38	28	26
Image	34	32	32	22	18	24	18	18	28	28	24	28	34
Dark Horse	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	2	2	0
Valiant	6	8	6	8	4	4	2	0	2	2	0	0	0
Malibu	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Defiant	2	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bongo	0	0	4	4	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hamilton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	0

Publishers' % family of titles shares:

	#35	#36	#37	#38	#39	#40	#41	#42	#43	#44	#45	#46	#47
X-family	20	18	16	18	22	16	20	24	20	20	20	22	20
Superman	10	8	8	14	14	14	16	16	16	14	22	12	10
Bat family	10	6	10	10	10	12	14	12	12	14	12	14	12
Spider-Man	12	8	8	10	10	12	12	14	10	8	8	8	12
Extreme	16	12	12	10	6	8	10	4	6	10	4	6	10
Homage	12	12	10	12	10	8	10	8	10	12	12	12	14

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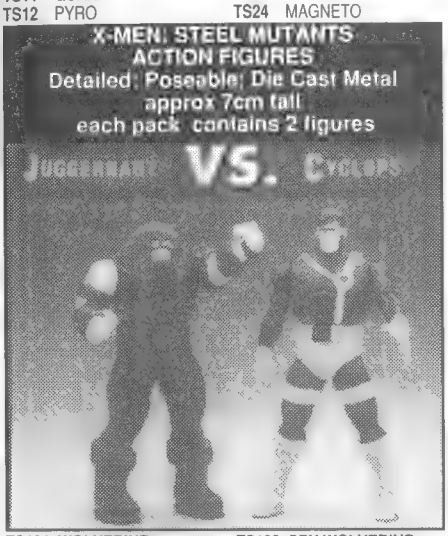

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***Review codes:** General competitive performance of a title is measured on a scale of **1 to 10**. A specific issue's quality, as measured against previous issues: <- - -> to <+ + +>.*

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***Reviews Editor:** Derek G. Skinn*

Review panel: Fabio P. Barbieri (FPB), Katie & Matthew Blakstad-Cook (KMBC), Simon Bowland (SB), Michael Graney (MG), Phil Hall (PH), Rol Hirst (RH), Richard J. Johnston (RJJ), Skinny Melink (SM), Peter C Phillips (PCP), Michael Sperlinger (MS)

DC COMICS

Adventures of Superman 0 <+ +> (Kesel & Kitson + McCarthy) An old school friend of Clark's is out to kill him for being so successful. Writer Kesel tells excellent flashback scenes with some superb banter between Lois and Clark, while Kitson's pencils are a real treat. (SB) **9**

Aquaman 2 <+ -> (David & Egeland + Vancata) Conflict makes character! We get a lot of both, including a scene that is going to put this comic on the "hot and scarce" list. The Image style artwork doesn't suit this title ideally, but Egeland has some hold over human anatomy. It's probably no secret now that Aquaman, one of DC's oldest characters, gets his hand and lower arm removed by piranhas. The interesting thing is that far from going after the hot comic buyer, there is evidence that this action was foreshadowed by David in his **Atlantis Chronicles** series in 1989. (RJJ) **7**

Aquaman 0 <+ -> (David & Egeland + Vancata) Although it's difficult to place Aquaman's involvement in **Zero Hour** in the middle of this storyline, that's a minor continuity quibble that I'll leave to others. Arthur gets his hook in a Peter David story with gorgeous art. (RH) **9**

Batman 0 <+ -> (Moench & Manley) Another re-telling of Batman's origin would seem rather unnecessary, but this tale does offer a few insights into areas of young Bruce Wayne's life never before covered, such as how he managed to avoid being taken into care when his parents died. (RH) **7**

<+> Origin recap delves into the motives for Bruce Wayne choosing the identity of the Batman and how he set about achieving his goal. Changes little of the known facts, but is none the worse for that. Ideal for newcomers. (PCP) **7**

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 0 <+> (various) Anthology previewing upcoming storylines from this and various Bat-specials. Some look good, some look dire. Vince Giarrano provides the bridging art. Strangely the "bridge" scripter goes unrecognised — though given the shallow plot maybe that was deliberate. (PCP) **5**

Batman: Shadow of the Bat 0 <+> (Grant & Blevins) Batman's ability to instill fear in Gotham City's criminal community comes under the microscope, along with more flashback details of his origin and early training. But this is a routine actioner which is let down further by Blevin's worse-by-the-issue visuals. (PCP) **3**

Books of Magic 5 <+> (Rieber & Snejbjerg) A view of a future where Sir Timothy Hunter has become a malevolent magus who rules Britain, while a fallen angel's girlfriend endeavours to save the Tim of our time from his evil fate. This title is fast becoming one of the best of the Vertigo line, and has fortunately avoided the trap that seems to go with the territory, namely sacrificing story for style. Snejbjerg's slightly cartoonish art is very endearing and suits the material. (MG) **8**

Detective Comics 0 <+ +> (Dixon & Nolan + Hanna) The origins of the Batmobile and the Batsuit are re-told, interwoven with a modern-day Bat tale really in the background. Excellent scripting and pacing, and Nolan's artwork is as superb as ever. (SB) **8**

<+> More secrets are revealed from Batman's past, including an answer to the question of just where he got all the Bat-vehicles from. Graham Nolan's art job is his best yet, sort of a mainstream Kevin Nowlan... interesting that their names are so similar. (RH) **8**

Fate 0 (J. F. Moore & Williams + Lanning) An Indiana Jones-style artifacts hunter finds himself caught up in the battle between Chaos and Order, trapped by fate into becoming Fate. Or something like that. Okay as first issues go, but the hero's a bit too much of a jaw-clenching cliche at the moment. (RH) **6**

Disconnected from the influence of the sorcerer Nabu, Kent and Inza Nelson crumble into decay, desperately seeking their replacement before their time runs out. Jared Stevens — con man and antiquated smuggler — is less than thrilled when he is selected. A satisfying debut issue far superior to the previous Dr Fate series. (PCP) **7**

Flash 0 <+ +> (Waid & Wieringo + Marzan) Wally fights back to the land of the living after the **Zero Hour** events, and in the process speeds through his past life. Waid, as ever, is a master with this character and Wieringo pulls out all the stops for his last **Flash** issue. This title is really going places now, and the recent introduction of Impulse, a new Flash from the future, serves only to spice things up yet more. (SB) **10**

<+> Trapped in the time-stream, Wally West sees his early life flash before his eyes, as Mark Waid introduces another of those impossible time paradoxes to the character's history that he enjoys so much. Wonderful art, sadly Wieringo's swansong on this book. (RH) **9**

<+> Believed killed in Zero Hour — Wally is in fact alive and well and bouncing through the time stream revisiting incidents in his past. An origin recap issue presented with some novelty and style. (PCP) **8**

Flash Annual 7 <+> (Wheatley & Gross + Benes) The Flash always brings out the best in people. Mark Waid, Travis Charest, Mike Wieringo and Carlos Pacheco, to name but a few, all started their now-successful careers on the Scarlet Speedster. Wheatley's smooth flowing story works wonders, even in an *Elseworlds* annual, and Gross's artwork is very promising. (SB) **9**

Green Arrow 0 <+> (Puckett & Aparo + Fernandez) My first reaction to the news that GA's new writer was another DC editor was to accuse them of the same kind of creeping nepotism that has infected Marvel of late. However, Puckett really *can* write, and this new direction for Oliver Queen looks both interesting and exciting. (RH) **8**

Green Lantern 0 <+> (Marz & Banks + Tanghal) The big gloves-off showdown between Hal and his replacement Kyle is a letdown for a number of reasons, notably that Marz seems unable to decide whether Hal is a bad guy or not. The way Kyle gives up and then gets back his ring is really quite stupid, and the only redeeming feature is Banks' art. (RH) **6**

<+> Hal Jordan and Kyle Raynor battle it out for possession of the sole remaining power ring — picking up from events in Zero Hour. Any chances of Jordan regaining his sanity or heroic status are dashed in an explosive finale. Good stuff but it's a shame to see DC mistreating one of its flagship characters. (PCP) **6**

Hawkman 0 <+> (Loebs & Lieber + Shoultz) Behind an impressive Lee Weeks cover, the new Hawkman is introduced, and this one looks like having the most potential of any Hawk incarnation since Tim Truman's **Hawkworld** mini. The interior art is improving too as Steve Lieber settles into his own style. (RH) **7**

Hellblazer 81 <-> (Ennis & Dillon) John Constantine ducks out of the action, as all hell breaks loose around him. He is changing and recognising that he's not what he once thought he was. The riot scenes outside seem contrived, led by plot and not character. Letting PC and anti-PC elements collide doesn't work, and Ennis, usually strong on characterisation, is letting us down on this one. Dillon's art is more suited to quieter, character issues than much of the violent action that takes place here. While Ennis aims at the gore gallery, Dillon still can't deliver what Ennis demands. (RJJ) **6**

Hellblazer 82 <+> (Ennis & Dillon) The long-awaited reunion of John and Kit is as beautiful as I'd hoped, with John offering to sacrifice everything for the woman he loves. Ennis can leave this book with pride, between these two characters he's created the most realistic love affair I have ever seen in a comic series. (RH) **10**

<+> An issue that resolves John and Kit's relationship in a fashion that is both realistic and true to the characters. Throughout Ennis's run on this title he's delivered the required amount of horror, but his real strength has always been the depth of his confrontation between Constantine and the Devil. The end of Ennis's tenure leaves me with a kind of sadness that I haven't felt since Alan Moore left **Swamp Thing**. (MG) **9**

Justice League International 68 <+ + +> (Priest & Jimenez + Stokes) What an issue! Priest writes a plausible JL story although the stars of the show are artists Phil Jimenez and John Stokes, who produce artwork that puts George Perez to shame! New hero Triumph is finally granted JL status when **Zero Hour** strikes. Excellent script, top notch art... why aren't they all like this? (SB) **10**

Justice League America 0 <+ -> (Jones & Wojtkiewicz) You'd have thought that DC might have used the opportunity of **Zero Hour** to give the JLA the revamp it desperately needs. Instead we are offered more of the same drab melodrama Gerard Jones has been peddling in JLE for the past few years. It seems the League may never regain its former glories. (RH) **3**

New Titans 0 <+> (Wolfman & Jones + various) Team membership is reshuffled in an effort to give the jaded series a shot in the arm. The potential is there — future issues will tell if that potential can be properly mined — though it still grates to see once upright Charlton hero Sarge Steel portrayed as a manipulative sleazeball. (PCP) **5**

Outsiders 0 <-> (Barr & Pelletier) The Outsiders split into two opposing teams following events in Zero Hour. This issue concentrates on the Eradicator-led team stumbling on an alien-controlled gun creation factory — weapons that corrupt the user and feed the aliens. Different, but hardly awe inspiring. (PCP) **4**

Primal Force 0 (Seagle & Hooper) A band of unusual characters, including Jack O'Lantern and Red Tornado, are pulled together to fight an ancient battle. Hardly the most original of premises or exciting group of characters but Seagle's script is impressive and Hooper's art clear and professional. (RH) **7**

A variety of characters including Red Tornado, Jack O'Lantern and Claw (the latter an updated version of a DC sword and sorcery hero) are brought together by Dr Mist to combat demonic threat to the Earth. Nice mix of diverse characters coupled with a strong script and tidy visuals. One to watch. (PCP) **8**

Robin 0 <+> (Dixon & Grummett + Kryssing) The careers of the three Robins are reviewed as the retiring Batman chooses a replacement, no surprises to find it's Dick Grayson, although Bruce's reasons still seem a mystery to me. The usual top-notch art job and a promising twist to the Bat-mythology. (RH) **8**

Shade 52 <-> (Milligan & Phillips) After the highly enjoyable storyline that climaxed in #50, this follow-up seems to be retreading water, offering plenty of Vertigo weirdness but not much character work from Milligan, and the drastically different art style doesn't help. Smells like filler material. (RH) **6**

The Spectre 0 <+ -> (Ostrander & Mandrake) The "team supreme" provides a thoughtful insight into The Spectre, and this makes an excellent jumping-on point for newcomers. Thoughtful script and moody artwork make this an excellent super-hero title. (SB) **9**

<-> Secrets of the Spectre's previous incarnations and his true connections to Heaven are revealed. Ostrander certainly knows his history, although this one-parter is less enjoyable than previous multi-part storylines. (RH) **7**

<+ -> The Spectre's previous lives are revealed as an ancient enemy makes itself known. A good story that successfully integrates figures from different belief structures into it, the ending clearly defines exactly what the Spectre's "raison d'etre" is, not existing to purge evil, but simply to punish it. (MG) **7**

Starman 0 (Robinson & Harris + Grawbadger) One of my favourite DC stars returns to DC continuity and is a far cry from Will Payton. The newest Starman is killed, and his brother is handed the mantle. The script is superb, the artwork very reminiscent of Mike Mignola, if not a

tad tighter, which can't be bad. (SB) 9

James Robinson is one of the best new writers to come to DC in the last few years. This is the most exciting Starman I've ever seen, with a real sense of the character's history and stunning cityscapes from the art team. (RH) 8

David Knight assumes the guise of Starman from his aged father only to be gunned down by agents of the Mist less than three pages into the narrative. Enter reluctant younger brother Jack Knight, who has no interest in becoming a superhero. James Robinson scores with a superlative script and while Harris and Grawbadger aren't Starman creator Jack Burnley, their art has a charm all its own. Another potential winner following the Zero Hour shake-up. (PCP) 8

Steel 0 (Simonson & Batista + Faber) The storyline still goes nowhere, and this isn't really a *zero* issue as such. However, the artwork is top notch. I've really warmed to Chris Batista's pencils and he's putting so much effort in every page! (SB) 6

Superboy 0 <+ +> (Kesel & Grummett + various) As ever, writer Kesel delivers the goods with a witty, fast-paced script which is enhanced by the talents of penciller Tom Grummett, truly a rare find. The highlight of this issue is Superboy using his new X-Ray Specs which his female companion, Tana Moon, isn't too pleased about! (SB) 8

<+ -> Professor Hamilton helps Superboy refine his powers and the Teen Wonder clashes with his hilarious (and stupid) arch-foe Sidearm. Much needed light relief, let's hope this book stays that way! (RH) 8

Superman 0 <+> A schoolboy rival comes back to haunt Clark Kent and Jurgens trots out all the cliches you'd expect from such a storyline. It's all okay, but don't come here looking for originality. (RH) 6

Superman: Man of Steel 0 <+ -> (Simonson & Bogdanove + Janke) A sinister rival from Clark Kent's childhood comes gunning for him in the first post-**Zero Hour** story. Most impressive about this is Bogdanove's art job, surprisingly good. (RH) 7

Swamp Thing 147 <-> (Millar & Hester) This issue starts well with a flashback as mainstream DC character the Spectre visits Vertigo Alec's mum warning her of the consequences to the world if she allows Alec to be born. Unfortunately, most of the rest of the issue is taken up with a military unit's attempt to kill Swampy, which, apart from the dialogue, is more reminiscent of mainstream fare. However, the introduction of the Hooded Man bodes well for this storyline's development. (MG) 6

Team Titans 21 <+ -> (Jensen + Jimenez & Tully + Pepoy) And so the Team Titans concludes, and what a way to go out. While the book is no longer graced with Jimenez's artwork, his writing is pretty good. In this final issue with an excellent cliff-hanger ending, the Titans are revealed to be pawns of an evil scheme from **Armageddon 2001** villain Monarch. (SB) 8

Vamps 3 <-> (Lee & Simpson) So, the Vamps, they kill people and they get their kits off, right? Sex and violence! What else do you need? Or am I being too cynical? There is a plot here somewhere, but that takes up about four pages, the rest is blood and babes. Shame Simpson's art makes all the babes look so ugly, or this could have been a bestseller... (RH) 5

Wonder Woman 0 <+ -> (Loebs & Deodato Jr.) Mike Deodato can draw, make no mistake. If you like cheesecake, you'll love his art here. However, whether he can tell a sequential story is another matter — the continuing contest for the job of Wonder Woman is very difficult to follow in places here — a little less flashy style, a little more storytelling is needed. (RH) 7

Zero Hour: A Crisis in Time 0 (Jurgens w/Ordway) As crossovers go, this is good with the Jurgens and Ordway combination providing dynamite artwork. But for a series that's supposed to relieve the confusion over the time lines, it's sure given *me* a cracker of a headache. Atom's reduced to a teenager, Hal Jordan is presumably killed and, alas, Batgirl is once more removed from existence. Cracking stuff, but what's going on? (SB) 7

<+> Final issue in which the DC universe is reformed and character debuts are bumped up the timestream to negate continuity/aging defects which are the bane of modern comics. A gatefold chart pigeon holes heroes into various centuries and effectively leaves everything where it was at the end of **Crisis on Infinite Earths**. A few anomalies though: why did Hal Jordan need alliance with Monarch if he was so powerful alone? — and if western hero Nighthawk died in **Crisis**, how come he's now back in DC continuity? But overall a worthy effort given that not everyone can be satisfied with the results. (PCP) 8

MARVEL COMICS

Amazing Spider-Man 394 <-> (DeMatteis & Bagley) *The Spider*, now devoid of the Peter Parker personality, heads into the Ravencroft Institute, a poor man's Arkham Asylum if ever there was one, and his clone follows to help him. Still readable due to DeMatteis's intelligent scripting, but really quite bleak. (RH) 6

Blackwulf 4 <- -> (Herdling & Medina) This started out with so much promise but now it's gone to the dogs. Herdling writes a satisfactory story but Medina's artwork is rushed after three gorgeous looking issues. There's a poorly executed back-up strip and next issue's a fill-in issue... already. This book needs to get back on track fast before it's too late. (SB) 4

Clandestine 1 (Davis & Farmer) At last, the book originally slated for Marvel UK release is here. Davis introduces an interesting new team of bizarre heroes but although his script is top notch, his gorgeous artwork is let down by Marvel UK's garish colouring and very obtrusive lettering. Davis deserves much better than this. (SB) 7

It's to be hoped Alan Davis sticks with this book as it's the best thing he's *ever* done. Packed with weird monsters, strange heroes and some of the best action sequences I've read in ages, plus the famous Davis humour and gorgeous art. Great stuff. (RH) 9

The characters are attractive; the script is good; the artwork is tremendous. So why the slight sense of let-down? Because the plot, a standard affair with a mysterious family pursued by ruthless and equally mysterious enemies, is not imaginative enough right now, but things may develop. (FPB) 8

Conan the Adventurer 5 <+ -> (Thomas & Kayanan) Artist Kayanan is already

going on a break after only five issues. But that aside, this is so much better than later issues of the original series, managing to recapture the old magic that's long since been missing. (SB) **7**

Fantastic Four 393 <+ -> (DeFalco & Ryan) A well-paced, intricately-plotted tale, and if it seems a bit busy, DeFalco manages to keep it all under control (here showing the human side of an old villain) while artist Ryan has so firmly implanted his style on the current look of the title, it would look strange without him. (SM) **8**

Generation X #1 (Lobdell & Bachalo) A pleasant surprise, considering how awful this might have been. Writer Lobdell serves up a batch of interesting new heroes (Chamber, in particular) and a genuinely spooky, sinister villain, in a smoothly paced, finely balanced story with some absolutely stunning art by **Shade** veteran Chris Bachalo, again adopting his vertiginous style to fit a mutant title without sacrificing any of its brilliance or impact. All wrapped up in a truly dazzling cover that for once justifies the rather hefty £2.95 cover price. All in all, an impressive package. (SM) **10**

Hellstorm 18 <+> (Ellis & Manco) This rich textured book could show some of the Vertigo titles a thing or two. It's very powerful in its restraint, the art bringing out the strength of the story. A twist to the usual portrayal of Satanism, it enables the reader to root for either side in the infernal battle, a tricky tightrope that Ellis masters, and the art reflects the nature of the book perfectly... Marvel has done a very silly thing in cancelling this book. (RJJ) **9**

Hellstorm 19 <+ -> (Ellis & Manco) Daimon encounters a devil worshipper possessed by an Angel. An unusual twist, with a script that is both frightening and funny (and sometimes sick) and respect for Regan and Carter of Sweeney fame. Buy it while you still can! (RH) **9**

Hulk 421 <+ -> (David & Frank + Smith) Big time happenings down at the Pantheon as the hunt for Agamemnon continues. Gary Frank's solid art is gaining ground as he becomes more comfortable with the characters and even includes some backgrounds this time. As ever, Peter David maintains a tight grip on the characters and events, injecting them with his own brand of humour. The Hulk continues to surprise as one of the best mainstream superhero comics in the business. (RJJ) **9**

Incredible Hulk 422 <-> (David & Frank + Smith) I'm not up to date on **Thor**, so many of the references are lost to me. I expected something a little more serious but Peter David decided to play this midpoint-in-the-story issue for laughs. Now that Gary Frank is leaving the title he seems to have lost the edge to his art that made him a fan-favourite. All-in-all, still a far better comic than the majority, but I expected more than just a biding-for-time issue. (PH) **6**

<+ -> In Asgard, the Hulk and his mates get caught up with a phoney Thunder God and a frightening Frost Wolf. Another hilarious script from David... oh yeah, and the Hulk dies, too! (RH) **9**

Punisher/Batman: Deadly Knights (Dixon & Romita Jr. + Janson) Sequel to DC's **Batman/Punisher: Lake of Fire** has the Punisher returning to Gotham on the trail of Jigsaw but coming up this time against the Bruce Wayne Batman. Predictability sets in early with usual hero posturing and fisticuffs. The Joker guests, but to no useful effect. (PCP) **3**

Silver Surfer 97 <+ +> (Marz & Hall + Christopher) Nova and the Surfer are re-united and set off on a treasure hunt through space. The Surfer's looking better than ever these days. Let's hope new penciller Joe Phillips will not disappoint when he debuts in #100. (SB) **9**

Spider-Man 51 <+ -> (Mackie & Lyle) The creative team of Mackie and Lyle once again deliver the goods with an intelligent script and clear artwork, and even get the Clone storyline to peak my interest at last. The back-up strip is poor, though, and if this is all Liam Sharp can produce these days then God help the Hulk when he takes over. (SB) **8**

Uncanny X-Men 318 (Lobdell & Cruz) Lobdell's strength as a writer is his ability to focus primarily on personality and character — the very thing that originally distinguished Marvel from the herd. There's no action in this tale at all: rather a series of character studies that is as compelling as any battle, finely rendered by guest artist Roger Cruz. (SM) **10**

INDEPENDENTS

Babe 2 <+> (Dark Horse; Byrne) She-Hulk this ain't! **Babe** generally only says one word — Babe — but she's extremely strong and this, coupled with her looks, enables her to deal with things, even when (this month) she's kidnapped by aliens! Byrne's having fun here and it shows. (SB) **9**

<+ -> Babe and co. are kidnapped by the most ridiculous aliens you'll ever see in comics as John Byrne's tongue-in-cheek mini-series continues. Byrne fails to produce anything other than consistently entertaining comics. (RH) **8**

Bone 15 <+ -> (Cartoon Books; Smith) Another chucklesome issue with the Bone brothers, Fone, Phoney and Smiley. Smith uses black and white art to his advantage, particularly during a lengthy thunderstorm sequence, only Frank Miller understands dark and light this well. (RH) **9**

<- +> Bone and Thorn pursue Gran'ma Ben in the forest, looking for answers to their dreams — and find rat creatures instead. Lucius and Phoney stake everything they have on a bet about who can manage a better bar. One of them has bitten off more than he can chew, and I think I know which one. Great stuff. (FTB) **10**

I decided, largely because of reviews I'd read, that I would try this title. So, having purchased all the issues to date, I sat down and read them. It took just over two hours to read fifteen issues. At $2.95 a go for a 19 page black and white concoction of Walt Kelly's Pogo. Disney's cutesy animals and Dave Sim's **Cerebus**, I felt more cheated than impressed. It's good, but it's not *that* good. (PH) **5**

Cerebus 185 <+ -> (Aardvark-Vanaheim; Sim) Sim continues to string the readers along following the bombshell he dropped two issues ago. With the question of Cerebus' long-term future seriously in doubt, and Sim's retelling of the birth of the universe as a battle of the sexes, this book is essential reading once again. (RH) **10**

Codename Strykeforce 6 (Image; Silvestri & Peterson) The leader of Cyberforce somehow has time to run a second superteam, only this just isn't as

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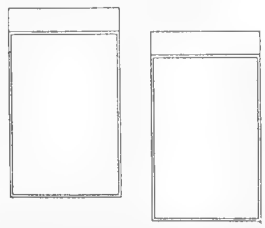

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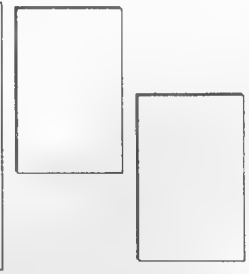

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good. It's okay as an Image book goes but Brandon Peterson's pencils look much better on the X-Men. So-so scripting. (SB) 5

Concrete: Killer Smile 2 <+> (Dark Horse; Chadwick) Larry's kidnap ordeal worsens as Concrete tries to help his friend. The strength of this book is seeing an ordinary guy in a position we normally only see super-cool heroes facing. And the *100 Horrors* back up is terrifying. (RH) 9

Cud <+> (Fantagraphics; Laban) The ultimate Bob Cudd story, as he faces his rival Clamm. Never better, Laban may have peaked with this one. His back-ups, again using tribal custom and tradition sets out a modern tale, and others satirise society successfully. His cartoonist skills and satirical swipes remain strong and the reader is constantly left with a new, if momentary, interpretation of the world and its customs around them. (RJJ) 9

The Dark 7 <+> (Continuum; Naftali & Lidstone + Hoff) The title switches from full-colour to toned black and white and actually looks better in the process. Lidstone's clean, crisp artwork is a real treat and, combined with snappy, lively scripting, makes this book a must-read. The Dark is a superhero who was gunned down and rendered comatose. When he awoke, he knew nothing of who he was and is now forced to come to terms with his life. (SB) 9

Deathblow 8 (Image; Lee + Choi & Sale) Michael Cray — Deathblow — is dying from a brain tumour and he has only one month left to live. But he's not taking it lying down. Intelligent dialogue and narration coupled with Tim Sale's moody artwork. (SB) 8

Firearm 10 (Ultraverse; Robinson & Erskine) Erskine has never looked so good as here with the flashy colouring and effects backing up his solid portrayal of people and objects. However, the arrival of the superhero-obsessed detective in London leads to all the cliches we would have expected from an American team, if given an interesting twist by virtual reality. I was almost expecting a chimney sweep singing a ditty to a group of admiring children. (RJJ) 8

Freak Force 8 <-> (Image; Giffen & Bridges) For some reason Bridge's usually first-rate artwork looks rushed on this month's less-than-great story. There's the good old JLA-esque humour in there, but not much else I'm afraid. The giant robot ants are good, though. (SB) 6

Freex 12 <-> (Ultraverse; Jones & Kolins) Following the events of **Giant-Size Freex** #1, Prime and our heroes are trapped underground and must deal with some really stupid-looking monsters. The prize: discovery of the origin of their powers. A number of interesting ideas, but hurt by poorish artwork and a melodramatic script. (FPB) 6

John Byrne's Next Men 27 (Dark Horse; Byrne) The plot thickens as Byrne still gives me no indication of where he's heading. Danny says farewell to Sandy who, upset, pulls the plug on her life-support machine. Byrne is at his best here! (SB) 9

Mantra 12 <-> (Ultraverse; Barr & Dodson) Dodson's often incomprehensible story-telling (eg. page 9, panels 1-2) makes the worst out of an already uninspired slugfest against some featureless demons and the growingly boring Boneyard. Not enough plot to fill one issue, let alone this crossover with **Strangers** 12. (FPB) 4

The Maxx 10 <+ -> (Image; Loebs & Kieth) One of this series' best features is the variety of atmosphere and content: the scene of Mr. Gone feeding the surgeon who reconstructed his head to the Isz is pure ghastly horror, but there is also good psychodrama in the tale of Julie's childhood, and even some subdued humour. Superb. (FPB) 10

Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind, Part Four #3 <+> (Viz; Miyazaki) After seventeen volumes of struggle through darkness, Miyazaki's great epic achieves light with the inevitability of a Beethoven symphony. Nausicaa witnesses the world purified, and Miralupa's dark soul is saved. Philosophically dubious — but what other comic's philosophy deserves to be seriously debated? (FPB) 10

Ninjak 10 (Valiant; Baron & Guichet) The post-Quesada issues were pretty close to dire but Baron and Guichet provide a refreshingly good story this month as Colin King (aka Ninjak) drops into Russia to neutralise an evil general and steal his new laser weapon. Artist Guichet could become a star of the future. (SB) 8

Psi-Lords 4 (Valiant; Bedard & Wong + Giordano) This is one heck of an original title! Bedard presents some lively and original characters in a well-plotted and well-scripted yarn. Wong's pencils are average but I suspect Giordano's inks are partly to thank; regular penciller Mike Leeke is far superior. (SB) 8

Radioactive Man 679 <+ -> (Bongo; Vance & Bavington) RM gets involved in a presidential scheme to outlaw costumed heroes, while super-beings arrive from a parallel universe. Sound familiar? That's because this issue is a parody of the revisionism and multi-hero crossovers that started in the Eighties. This very entertaining issue manages some direct hits as it even follows the panel structure of its targets, an affectionate send-up rather than a mickey-take. (MG) 7

Rai and the Future Force 27 <- -> (Valiant; Bedard & Kobasic + Ramos) Whoops! This title is running around with "turkey" written all over it. It's sadly losing direction and the new penciller leaves a lot to be desired. I'm disappointed because this is usually one of Valiant's best titles. (SB) 3

Rascals in Paradise 1 (Dark Horse; Silke) Tongue-in-cheek adventures of bimboesque law enforcement officer on a jungle covered planet — it was supposed to be an Earth lookalike but the experiment ran amok. Entertaining, with pithy dialogue and superb visuals. Some nudity, and presented in magazine, not comic-book size. (PCP) 8

Savage Dragon 12 (Image; Larsen) Even the Dragon is hitting a bad spell this month, thanks to the ridiculous She-Dragon. But Larsen's superb subplotting entertains and his art style suits to the title down to the ground. (SB) 8

Secret Weapons 15 (Valiant; Berdinka & Nadeau) Four psionically enhanced British intelligence agents don their super suits to combat crime on a higher scale. This book is better than before, but it's still a way to go. The artwork is not quite polished enough yet, though the scripting is quite good. (SB) 7

Sentinels of Justice 2 <+ -> (AC; Black & Larkins + Allen) Jet Girl comes to the rescue of a bikini-clad swimming team abducted by evil Doctor Montmorency Watson and his giant vultures. A '90s comic with the fun and flavour of the '50s. A Captain Flash reprint dealing with invaders from space — and a surprising link to the TV Invaders series — rounds out this issue. (PCP) 6

Shadowman 31 <+ +> (Valiant; Hall) One of Valiant's best titles which is consistently entertaining. The Shadowman faces the "Night Monster" and loses... though it is

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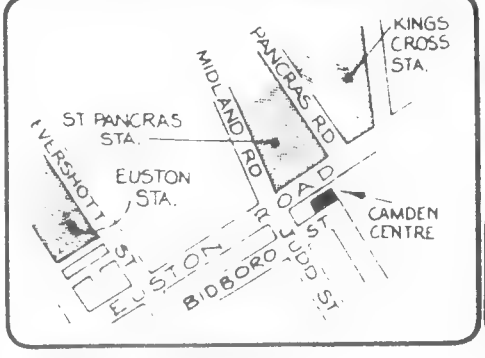

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not quite as cut and dried as that. (SB) **9**

Solar 39 <- +> (Valiant; VanHook & Wendel) This book needs more original plotting and a competent artist. VanHook is clearly fresh out of original ideas, while Wendel tries, but achieves little. As an inker he is hot, as a penciller he is not. (SB) **4**

The Solution 11 <+ -> (Ultraverse; Hudnall & Statema) Not your conventional superteam, this has three dimensional characters and realistic scripting. Statema's pencils are a treat and the Dan Brereton cover paintings are excellent. (SB) **8**

<+ -> The Solution is a comic without a central idea, uneasily hovering between corporate shenanigans on this Earth and star-wars alien conflicts. This is perhaps why the great John Statema looks so uninspired in these issues, despite what could be a visually exciting alien setting. (FPB) **5**

Tale of One Bad Rat 1-4 (Dark Horse; Bryan Talbot) If you want superheroes and action then don't read this comic. If you want one of the most poignant and rivetting stories told in comics then buy this. Talbot exhibits a caring and understanding that places you in the shoes of Helen Potter, the central character of the story. A tale about sexual abuse, living as a teenage runaway and coping with the loss of her rat is a brilliant example of comics realising their fullest capabilities. Some of the best artwork I have ever seen from Talbot, who expresses a real feel for all his chosen landscapes, especially the Lake District. If he doesn't scoop the major awards next year with this, I will personally organise a riot. Brilliant. (PH) **10**

Timewalker 1 (Hall & Perlin) Don Perlin's pencils are so much better when inked by Gonzalo Mayo, and when you couple this with strong vivid colouring and a first rate, lively and well-paced script, you've got a winner! An enhancement free cover helps too, particularly on the old purse strings. Ivar the Time Walker tip-toes through time into hilarious and serious situations, and I'll be along for the ride. (SB) **9**

Ultraforce 1 (Ultraverse; Jones & Perez + Vey) George Perez bounces back with this debut issue and he's better than ever. The artwork just oozes detail, and is backed up by an intelligent script by Gerard Jones. The Ultrateam gets off to a shaky start as its members all have different views on what the team should do. What follows is classic team book action. (SB) **9**

Excellent premise — Ultraforce is brought together by the pressure of circumstances more than by anybody's plans; the very name is in the air before they decide to become a group. Perez, of course, was born to draw group comics. The one flaw is in consistently awful female characters — Contrary, a bikini bimbo as Goddess-like as John Major; Pixx, an unsympathetic brat; and Topaz, a stupid cliche. (FPB) **7**

Wetworks 2 (Image; Portacio + Choi & Williams) Vampires, men in gold suits, not many panels and some computers. That's it. If you want anything else, like a point to a comic, buy something else. (RJJ) **1**

WildC.A.T.s 12 <+ -> (Image; Lee & Claremont + Williams) Claremont is still perking the title up — not that it was too shabby before, mind you — but the whole thing just seems a little muddled. The Huntsman, Claremont's own character, is suitably mysterious, though some of the scenes feel cliched. His **X-Men** run can never be emulated, no matter what the circumstances. (SB) **7**

Vengeance of Vampirella 5 <+ +> (Harris; Sniegoski & Van Wormer + Nichols) This is a title that is going places. Behind a costume that's bound to provoke cries of "sexism!" is an excellent and superbly developed character. The artwork is not exactly "hot" but you know, you can really enjoy the comic. It's got a nice feel to it — the comic, that is. (SB) **8**

UK TITLES

The Dalek Chronicles (Whitaker & various) A reprint of the entire run of *The Daleks* strip from **TV Century 21,** dating from the '60s. Although the style of David Whitaker's script seems very naive now, it retains its charm. However, it is undermined by this collection being photographic reproductions from the published comic, rather than being printed from the source film separations, and consequently the artwork suffers. (MG) **7**

Mort (VG Graphics; Pratchett & Higgins) I've never read a Terry Pratchett book and even after this superb example of story telling I probably still won't, I'll wait for other comics adaptations. Mort is by far and away the best graphic novel I have read in years. It is well drawn, well scripted and has one of the funniest stories I have ever read. Death takes on an apprentice — Mort — and then leaves the inexpenenced lad the key to the house while he goes off to have some fun. The resulting mistakes create a time paradox so original it had me in stitches. If this is an example of what Pratchett is capable of at his first comics attempt then give the man a job somebody. While he's writing books, we're missing out on something really rather special. Graham Higgins artwork suits the story perfectly. (PH) **10**

SMALL PRESS

Bulldog 3 (Cobley; Bradbury, Cameron, Macdonald; £1.00 from Jason Cobley, 33 Willowbank, Fazeley, Tamworth, Staffs) One of the better small press offerings and quite capable of making it to the pro-circuit. An interesting mix of Blighty humour and manga-influenced artwork, Cobley's writing is accomplished and artist Kieran MacDonald should be working for the major publishers before long. A very enjoyable issue and recommended to fans of the old **Excalibur**. (PH) **7**

Better Than Nothing 14 (various; 45p incl p&p from Dave Thundershorts, 34 Oaklands Drive, Westone, Northampton NN3 3JL) *Marvel Comics in Feltpen Furore* is a must read, as the guys who profess to know nothing about comics have a stab at the medium. More Star Wars nonsense and a running joke on Stephen King books are the comics-related highlights, while the irrelevance continues and the appearance improves. (PH) **8**

The Comics Irregular 1 (F.P. Barbieri) **Comics International** reviewer Fabio Barbieri prefers to express himself in more than 50 words. His one-man 'zine is remarkable for the length — and depth — of the essays. A uniquely European perspective, examining important artists who are familiar here — and reappraising those who are. Fascinating. (KMBC) **7**

Stupidface 3 (Steve Marchant) Outrageously hilarious self-deprecating small press title featuring stories of creator Steve Marchant's day to day existence. Full of splendid observations on life and living with a silly haircut. Marchant could easily find a home with Fantagraphics. (PH) **7**

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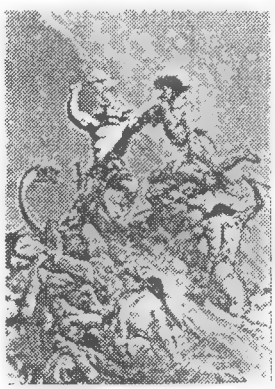

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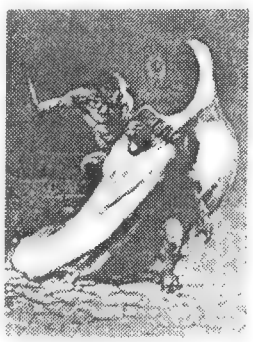

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A NOTICE TO ALL CREATORS, CONTRIBUTORS AND PARTICIPANTS OF *THE WORM* (aka THE LONGEST COMIC STRIP IN THE WORLD)

When *The Worm* was completed at the Trocadero in 1991, the London Cartoon Centre had high hopes that it would be published quickly to earn future revenue to run courses at the Centre.

Three years on, and the Centre has cut its programme to the absolute minimum but somehow still survives.

In the last few years many publishers have shown interest in the project, but none have followed up their initial interest as production costs have proved too great a stumbling block.

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r REVIEWS EXTRA

Occasionally, a title creates such a furore that it deserves more than the traditional fifty word review. Such a title is Vertigo's new ongoing monthly, ***The Invisibles*** *by the* ***2000AD*** *Zenith team of Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell. Michael Sperlinger and D. R. Booth offer the following contrasting opinions.*

Michael Sperlinger:

IF you are even vaguely observant, or more especially if you are a dedicated follower of fashion, you will have been unable to avoid the barrage of pre-publication publicity for Grant Morrison's **The Invisibles**. This is hardly surprising, since Morrison is a master of publicity, the man who got *Big Dave* a feature in **The Guardian**.

This time, however, the "Glaswegian boy wonder" (as *Select* would have it) has outdone himself; and, not surprisingly, this means there was a backlash in progress even before **The Invisibles** hit the stands. The first reactions I'd heard about it ran along the lines of: "More of Morrison's clever-clever, impenetrable, plotless bollocks and no mistake, chum". And I have no doubt that in this very publication — a bastion of integrity, no less — you will read some snide remarks to the same effect.

Ignore them. **The Invisibles** is brilliant. It urinates, from a great height, on any other book currently on the market. In fact, make that any other book *ever written*. It is, to quote the man, about: "action, philosophy, paranoia, sex, magic, biography, travel, drugs, religion, UFOs" — in short, the stuff of life. And it works. Not in a smug, glib, comfortable, moralising way, a la Gaiman et al, but in a way designed to genuinely shake the foundations of your boring, complacent middle-class lives.

This, naturally, will annoy people. The people with a voice inside the industry — people like myself, who for the most part will take violent objection to a comic which kicks their sensibilities violently and does so with an enormous style and panache.

Moreover, let's face it, the critics have never liked Morrison and he, consequently, has never liked them. So forget us critics, with our petty prejudices — judge for yourself. Please. Yes, *you*. You may hate **The Invisibles** — though I doubt it, if you have the merest ounce of grey matter. Nevertheless, it will undoubtably provoke in you some reaction — which is more than can be said for 99.9% of four-colour trash. You may be fascinated, repelled, excited or furious — but Morrison will have succeeded in making you *feel*. (And, if you're an Image fan, at least there's Steve Yeowell's wonderful, flesh-rending art to enjoy — something, as I said, for everyone.)

Of course, you may be put off by Morrison's reputation as *ahem* 'pretentious'. And, in the comics industry, of course, that's a very bad thing to be. But the only 'pretensions' Morrison has are towards writing intelligent, original stories which make you *think*. Yes, that word. Hey, I may not be able to give you a gospel interpretation of **The Mystery Play** but I *do* know it made me think, it excited me and I had a lot of interesting, heated conversations about it. It wasn't controversial because Morrison set out to be, but because it was *good*. The problem with Morrison is that he's always been too intelligent, too different, too challenging — and — let's face it — too damn good-looking for most of his critics to bear. What Gillian Jaysmith said with sarcasm, I say in blind admiration: Grant Morrison *is* God.

Perhaps what all this antipathy boils down to, in the end, is not Morrison's writing or even envy of his huge charisma, but this attitude to comics themselves: disposable. Expendable. And, ultimately, worthless. And he's right, and that gets under people's skins. When he tells people to sell their comics and go off round the world, he's deadly serious. Why sit at home re-reading **WildC.A.T.s** back issues when you could be skydiving in Malaysia? Life is for the living, after all, not idling-away-in-fantasy-while-it-passes-me-by. Would you *really* disagree?

Me, I'm off to sell my very own collection and book my tickets to wildest Madagascar. Just as soon as the market picks up a bit...

D. R. Booth:

I opened **The Invisibles** wanting to hate it. Any pre-destined cult book deserves reservation, even contempt, for its self hype. Morrison's first "superhero" book since **Doom Patrol** was heralded as such, and was bound to be a reviewer's target.

Me, I'm an old fashioned superhero fan, who's disillusionment with the genre has been growing for months. I've had this feeling that very little hasn't been done and, instead of returning to its roots, it's now set in a video game mentality.

The Invisibles #1 is about one of those video game mentals. Forget **The Invisibles** themselves, they're just Morrison's The Endless except they seem to be human and subversive rather than anthropological gods.

The Invisibles is not the story of #1, that belongs to their newest recruit, the boy with the manufactured name, Dane McGowan — Morrison's homage to the sixties, I've no doubt. Dane is completely unlikeable, he is everything about the youth of today that I don't like. You don't feel for him at all during the first issue and perhaps that is what Morrison wants. The problem is, you don't feel for any of the characters — yes, I know, this is a first issue scene setter, but...

Dane McGowan has a five second interest span, is more interested in blowing things up and "sees" ghosts. Morrison writes Dane as if he has an open line into the minds of 16 year old yobs. The realism in the dialogue isn't desirable. Neither for that matter is the inclusion of John Lennon, but once you die, you can become the plaything of anyone who wishes to use your likeness.

That isn't to say that I didn't like it. The swearing, I'm sure, is there to see how far Morrison can push the DC execs rather than to add anything to the story. But I was impressed, so much so that I placed an order with my comic shop. It may just be doing something different with superheroes.

There is something exciting about the subversity here, even if the realism of the comic is lost in the Hammer-horror setting of a totally unbelievable Reform School. And that isn't so bad, because **The Invisibles**' realism of dialogue is what makes it offensive and makes it work. We are not talking about fantasy with a capital F here.

Steve Yeowell, I believe, was Morrison's choice as artist and he handles the job well. I don't know if either he or Jill Thompson — his replacement from issue #5 — are the people to make **The Invisibles** as successful as **Sandman**, but I do get the impression that **The Invisibles** is the book that Vertigo hope will replace **Sandman**.

For it to do that it has a long way to go, but this was a promising beginning.

MAIL ORDER INDEX

WITH the ever-increasing diversity of comics and related items being offered to readers through the post, the ***Comics International*** *Mail Order Index has been designed to help the buyer identify specialists in key areas of collecting. Where telephone numbers are given, readers are advised to phone advertisers only during standard working hours.*

Code to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available
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s-wants	= sae with wants lists
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cc	= major credit cards accepted
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GOLDEN AGE TITLES

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945 but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order,** 158 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

■ **Incognito**, 14 Starnes Court, Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/Fax 0622-683642

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■ **Stateside Comics PLC**, 125 East Barnet Road, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 081-449 5535

SILVER AGE TITLES

Generally deemed to commence in 1955 with DC Comics' hero rebirth through ***Detective 225*** *(introducing the Martian Manhunter) and* ***Showcase 4*** *(introducing the new Flash), herein covering up to late 1960s.*

■ **Cosmic Comics**, PO Box 1771, London E17 9PW. (cat, wants, CoBRA)

■ **Heritage Comics**, 195 High St, Alsagers Bank, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 8BA (cat, wants) 0782 723329

■ **Incognito**, 14 Starnes Court, Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/fax 0622-683642

■ **Just Comics**, 2 Crossmead Ave, Greenford, Middx UB6 9TY (cat-28p, CoBRA)

■ **Select Comics**, PO Box 39, Derby DE1 9TD (cat, wants) 0332-340984

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POST-SILVER AGE

Comics from the 1970s to date: Bronze Age-Marvel Age-Lead Age up to Platinum Age-Valiant Age-Image Age. Historians will doubtless decide on a name.

NEW **AmerCom**, 36 Glan Morfa, Llandudno Junction, Gwynedd LL29 9AA (s-cat)

■ **Comics Warehouse**, PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 0621 850351

■ **Cosmic Comics**, PO Box 1771, London E17 9PW. (cat, wants, CoBRA)

■ **Darkside**, 100 Nightingale Lane, London E11 2HE (wants, CoBRA) 081 989 9955

■ **David Johnson Comics**, 45 Broadmead, Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 9AW (s-cat, dis, s-wants)

■ **Heritage Comics**, 195 High Street, Alsagers Bank, Stoke on Trent, ST7 8BA (cat, wants) 0782 723329

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HOT COMICS

Current or key titles, usually first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble on what will increase in value.

■ **Comics Unlimited**, Unit 11, The Arcade, Letchworth, Hertfordshire. (wants, CoBRA) 0462 480018

■ **Cosmic Comics**, PO Box 1771, London E17 9PW. (cat, wants, CoBRA)

■ **Darkside**, 100 Nightingale Lane, London E11 2HE (wants, CoBRA) 081 989 9955

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 081-298 1363

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ADVANCE IMPORTS

US comics are not in newsagents, except for almost all DCs and most $1.25 Marvels, shipped seafreight. The following offer air-shipped copies from all major publishers.

■ **ACE Comics**, 1 Headgate Buildings, St Johns Street, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 0206 561912

■ **Beyond Comics & Books**, 1 Ballina St, London SE23 1DR (s-cat, s-wants, CoBRA) 081 291 7171

■ **Comics Unlimited**, Unit 11, The Arcade, Letchworth, Herts SG6 3ET (s-cat,s-wants) 0462 480018

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 081-298 1363

■ **Floppy Tongue**, 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 7QY (cat, w/s, wants, CoBRA) 0722 331107

■ **Forbidden Planet**, 71 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG (s-cat, cc) 071 497 2150

■ **Gosh! Strips by Mail**, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 071 636 1011

■ **Mega-City Comics**, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ (s-cat, cc, CoBRA) 071 485 9320

■ **Planet X**, 5 London Road, Worcester WR5 2DJ (wants,CoBRA) Phone/fax: 0905 355055

■ **Red Hot Comics**, 42 Berridale Ave, Cathcart, Glasgow G44 3AE (CoBRA, s-wants) 041-637 0162 (10am-11pm)

■ **Stateside Comics PLC**, 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 081-449 5535

■ **Timezone**, 12 Fish St, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR (dis, cat, wants) 0743 365192

LIMITED EDITIONS

Many high-profile mini-series and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order**, 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, s&n, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

■ **Darkside**, 100 Nightingale Lane, London E11 2HE (wants, CoBRA, ash) 081 989 9955

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc, s&n) 081-298 1363

■ **Stateside Comics PLC**, 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n) 081-449 5535

TRADING CARDS

An increasing number of traders carry a wide range of comics-related trading cards and their peripherals (files, folders, etc).

■ **Adventure Seekers!**, 105 Hullbrook Road, Billesley, Birmingham, B13 OLE (cat, wants) 021 444 0986

■ **Discount Trading Cards**, 18 Birch Ave, Romiley, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 4DG (cat, wants, dis, CoBRA) 061 494 8369

■ **Fantasy Domain**, 212 Grange Rd, Plaistow, London E13 0HB (s-cat, s-wants, CoBRA)

■ **First Choice Cards**, 11 Keith Avenue, Liverpool L4 5SL (cat, wants, CoBRA) 0831 765811

■ **Floppy Tongue**, 96 Fisherton Street, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 7QY (cat, w/s, wants, CoBRA) 0722 331107

■ **Next Millennium**, 14 Newark Way Hendon London NW4 4JL (wants, dis) 081-203 0014

■ **Stateside Comics PLC**, 125 East Barnet Rd, Barnet, EN4 8RF (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 081-449 5535

■ **Timezone**, 12 Fish St, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1UR (dis, cat, wants) 0743 365192

NEW **Wokingham Comics & Trading Cards**, 8 Paice Green, Wokingham, Berks RG11 1YN (s-cat, s-wants) 0734 790441

ORIGINAL ART

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available.

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order**, 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

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Specialists in high quality images, of American and/or European origin.

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Comics-related t-shirts, posters, video games, video films, badges, etc.

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Acid-free protection for valuable comics. Backing boards, bags, storage boxes, etc.

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■ **Incognito**, 14 Starnes Court, Union Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EB. (s-wants, CoBRA, cc) Phone/fax 0622-683642

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COMICS AUCTIONS

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions can provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their comics.

■ **Comic Book Postal Auctions Limited**, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 071 586 3007

■ **Flights of Fantasy**, 82b Broadway, Bexleyheath DA6 7LW (cat) 081-298 1363

MANGA TITLES

English language translations and Japanese-style American comics.

■ **ACE Comics**, 1 Headgate Buildings, St Johns Street, Colchester, Essex C02 7AD (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 0206 561912

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, cc) 081-298 1363

ART & REFERENCE

Comics history reference magazines & books (ref) plus art books (art) and newspaper strip compilations (strip).

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order**, 158 Kent House Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, ref, art, strip, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

■ **Edge of Forever, The**, 82 b Broadway, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7LW. (wants, CoBRA, ref, cc) 081-298 1363

ALTERNATIVE & BIOG

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life titles (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar, etc)

■ **Conquistador Comic Art Mail Order**, 158 Kent House Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1JY (wants, CoBRA, s-cat, cc) 081-659 9714

■ **Gosh! Strips by Mail**, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 071 636 1011

■ **Knockabout Comics**, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 081 969 2945 (fax: 081 968 7614)

AMERICAN COMICS DISTRIBUTORS

Anybody considering opening a comics specialist shop can obtain further information about the supply of titles from any of the following wholesalers, who air-freight bulk copies of North American comics and related items into Britain on a weekly basis:

■ **Diamond Comic Distributors**, Unit 3, Crown Business Estate, Horton Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 8BR 0895-431 582

■ **Titan Distributors**, Unit 1, Empson Street, London E3 3LT 071 538 8300

■ **First Choice Wholesale**, 8 Galliford Rd, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD 0621 851 651

In addition, copies of DCs and selected Marvel titles are available to newstrade outlets from their national UK distributors, who ship copies sea-freight from America.

■ **Comag** (selected Marvel US plus Fleetway & other UK titles) 08954 44055

■ **Portman Distribution** (full range of DC comics only) 0533 693861

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X-Men no more!

SO, it turns out that Marvel did have some big comics news this autumn, after all.

Just when all the talk in industry papers and magazines regarding a major Marvel storyline announcement seemed to have gone quiet, Marvel is now — without fanfare — ushering in their answer to **Zero Hour**.

Starting in the January, readers will find completely different comics, with different titles, a radically changed mutant history and no Professor Xavier in their monthly hit of X-books.

The storyline which will run across an indefinite number of months next year follows the premise of "What If Charles Xavier had been killed twenty years before he could form the X-Men?". This change will have far-reaching effects on all Marvel comics' continuity.

All the X-titles are being cancelled!

But they *are* being replaced. In their stead will be alternative versions:

X-Men becomes **Mutants** #1

Uncanny X-Men becomes **The Uncanny** #1

Wolverine becomes **Weapon X** #1

X-Factor becomes **Factor-X** #1

Excalibur becomes **X-Calibre** #1

X-Force becomes **X-Posse** #1

Generation X becomes **New Mutants** #101

X-Men Unlimited becomes **X-Men Chronicles** #1

Cable becomes **X-Man** #1

The ongoing link for the Xavier death crossover will be the arch villain, Apocalypse.

Of course, this could be the most stunning marketing move since the death of Superman. If the "new" titles all succeed — and most of them could use a new first issue sales boost to compete with the top sellers — don't expect this to be a short term move. If fan reaction is good, there are two opportunities for Marvel to make a major killing:

(i) This alternative timestream could become a new 2099-style family, a Marvel's ongoing answer to DC's *Elseworlds*.

(ii) In conjunction, as well as having boosted sales on all X-books, Marvel could then bring back all the original titles, recommencing with first issues, either as part of the same continuity or with a Professor X.

However, the chances are that it won't be anything more than just a short-term way to boost sales for a few months, and Stan Lee's famous "no change, just the illusion of change" quote will again be utilised.

DC had a chance to boost sales by returning to first issues following their Zero Month, but failed to take advantage of the potential. Will Marvel rise to the occasion?

Warren piece

IT SEEMS that Marvel has at last recognised something that DC caught on to years ago. Britain produces some of the best writers in the business.

There have been few exceptions. Initially Steve Parkhouse on **SHIELD** in the late '60s - until he had to leave the US, then a 20 year leap to Pat Mills (**Ravage 2099**), Alan Grant (**RoboCop**), Simon Furman (**Alpha Flight**), briefly Barry Windsor-Smith (on Weapon X) and the Dan Abnett/Andy Lanning team on **The Punisher** and **Force Works**. Not exactly a large ongoing line of talent.

The only "British" writers that Marvel has employed consistantly over the years are Chris Claremont and John Byrne — both born here but now naturalised Americans.

So it is heartening to see that Warren Ellis, the Southend-based writer of **Hellstorm** and **Excalibur**, is on the verge of becoming one of Marvel's most favoured creators, with high praise in their **Sales to Astonish/True Believer** retailer pack, excellent reviews and it now seems carte blanche to do things with the company's characters that have never been done before.

Ellis was recently approached to write a **What If** story as his editor had acquired the book. After offering a somewhat outrageous proposal editor Marie Javins said that although one of the best **What If's** she had read, she doubted whether her bosses would be keen on running such a story.

But Ralph Macchio okayed it (much to Javins surprise) though he didn't think Tom DeFalco would. After DeFalco had okayed it, the project grew.

The idea had such gems as Banner getting cancer from gamma radiation (hey, no Hulk); a spacecraft hitting cosmic rays and the crew perishing (hey, no Fantastic Four), Galactus dying of hunger before he reached Earth (hey, no Silver Surfer) and so on. Oh, and everybody spitting on the thawed-out Captain America's shield in the unpatriotic '60s.

Instead of being rejected, Ellis's story will be doing a **Killing Joke**, and more: a two-issue **Man without Fear** (aka Select) format mini that may herald the new line of upmarket What If come Elseworlds titles.

This coincides with his new **Druid** project, featuring the very first Marvel hero, Dr Droom, who was reintroduced into the Marvel

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continuity by Walt Simonson as Dr Druid and later became the leader of both **The Avengers** and the **Secret Defenders**.

Suddenly Marvel's magic man, Ellis is also to redefine the company's occult universe in a **Marvels** style mini-series with Paul (**Espers**) Johnson handling the painted artwork.

As well as giving Warren his fair share of hype, the company has offered new work to three other writing talents. Mark (**The Flash**) Waid, Jeph (**Batman**) Loeb and John (**Spectre**) Ostrander have all been signed up by Bob Harras to do new and existing X-Men projects.

Fabian out of favour

THE news that Mark Waid has joined the X-Men team has fuelled rumours that head **X-Men** writer Fabian Nicieza has blotted his copy books in a major way.

Recently it was suggested that Tom DeFalco did not want to renew his contract as editor-in-chief of Marvel and that a number of people applied for his job. The obvious candidates included DeFalco's right-hand man Mark Gruenwald and X-titles chief Bob Harras.

Nicieza was rumoured to have also applied, and was said to have been critical of some of his competition, notably his editor, who it seems was never actually interested in DeFalco's job in the first place.

But the status quo almost remained the same as DeFalco signed up, but a certain writer lost face in the eyes of his editor.

Whether Fabe is off the X-books remains to be seen, but Waid has received plaudits from reviewers for his innovative style of handling supposedly "lame" characters and has transformed **The Flash** into one of DC's top selling superhero book behind **Batman** and **Superman**.

Although the two main **X-Men** books are still selling well, there is a rumour at Marvel that the lesser-selling titles could do with a much-needed boost and Waid may be the man to do it.

TTFN CSN

IT WAS a shame to hear that **Comics Speculator News** has disappeared. The people in charge put a lot of work into it and tried hard, but one wonders what their intended market was meant to be in the first place.

Altered Image?

IMAGE Comics has announced new titles and new creators joining the Californian-based company.

● A number of Image artists are currently working with the former **Daredevil** writer, Ann Nocenti, on a new series for 1995 entitled **The Darkness**.

● Artist Travis Charest is replacing Jim Lee on **WildC.A.T.s** as of issue #16. British writer James Robinson is to write some fill-in issues of the comic but Brandon Choi will return as regular writer on the title using Jim Lee plots.

● Whilce Portacio is remaining on **Wetworks** until at least issue #9. At which point he will leave the series and develop a **Blood & Iron** title for Image based on his 1990 posters.

● The **Gen-13** ongoing series is to start in February 1995 and will be pre-empted by a trade paperback of the first 6 issues including new material.

● Sam Kieth's **The Maxx** is becoming a series for MTV as part of an anthology show called *The Head*. William Messner-Loebs, who scripts the Image comic, will act as creative consultant.

● Todd McFarlane announced that a **Spawn** film is in pre-production with a proposed release for summer 1995. There is also an animated series in development for HBO.

● Chris Claremont is writing a three issue story arc for **Cyberforce** which will feature the second appearance of his character The Huntsman. The story begins in the $1.95 priced issue #9.

● Erik Larsen has announced that, like his Image co-founders, he is forming his own production company. The company will be called Highbrow Inc, and it is thought that the new name reflects the friendly jibes from Larsen's fellow Imagers about the Savage Dragon creators diminishing hairline.

● Todd McFarlane is rumoured to be courting John Romita Jr to work on a **Spawn** project. Romita Jr has always stated that he was happy working for Marvel, but has also never said he wouldn't work for other companies. The former **Daredevil** and **Uncanny X-Men** artist told friends in San Diego that he enjoyed drawing Batman and the Joker so much in the **Batman/Punisher** crossover that he wanted to draw some other famous characters.

Barry's back!

DESPITE good reviews and better than average sales, Barry Windsor-Smith has left most of the creative work on the Ultraverse's **Rune** and is currently working on two new creator-owned projects.

In a recent **Comics Buyers Guide** a double-page spread advertised two new Windsor-Smith projects, **The Freebooters** and **Gods**. More details in the coming months.

Cross company capers

THE increasing popularity of inter-company crossovers has taken the comics industry by storm and in the wake of the San Diego trade show many announcements have been made.

● Dark Horse and DC comics are teaming up again for a three issue 1995 **Superman/Aliens** project.

● DC Comics and Malibu are planning a team-up between two of their characters in 1995. At this year's San Diego Convention attendees were polled as to who they would like to see and a shortlist was drawn up by the two companies.

The potential crossovers are:

Prime/Shazam
Sludge/Aquaman
Freex/Primal Force
Firearm/Starman
Mantra/The Spectre
Hardcase/Batman
Nightman/Huntress
Solitaire/Superman
Prototype/Flash
Ultraforce/Justice League

● Jim Valentino's Image character **Shadowhawk** is to team up with Harris Publishing's **Vampirella** for a two issue 48 page series. One issue produced by each company.

Rob Liefeld announced after San Diego that Extreme Studios is working with Marvel Comics on a variety of crossover projects

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Ultraverse # 0 Coupon Set £10.00
[Consists of Hardcase, Prime and Strangers # 1's, Malibu Sun # 26 and a Freex OR Mantra # 1.]

Ultraverse: Flood Relief £5.00
[The charity sendaway book that was advertised in various Ultraverse titles.]

Wizard # 35 & 36 Set £5.00
[Each contains a 16 page comic which premieres the first appearance of Ultraforce, a new regular Ultraverse title coming out latter this year.]

UltraForce # 0 ..... £1.60
[Collects the 2 part story from Wizard # 35 & 36.]

UltraForce # 1 ..... £1.60
[With Prime/UltraForce Trading Card enclosed.]

UltraForce # 1 Ashcan £0.70
[A special 16 page limited edition ashcan providing all the background you need for the story, including sketchs etc.]

Ultraverse Year One # 1 ..... £3.20
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[Part 0 with parts 1 - 4 of this storyline appearing in Night Man # 12, Solitaire # 10, Solution # 13 and Giant-Sized Prototype # 1.]

Giant-Sized Rune # 1 ..... £1.60
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[Consists of Set A at £15.00 PLUS Hardcase, Prime and Strangers # 1's, as well as a Malibu Sun # 26. Using the four coupons enclosed in these issues as well, you can also get the extra uncut sheet.]

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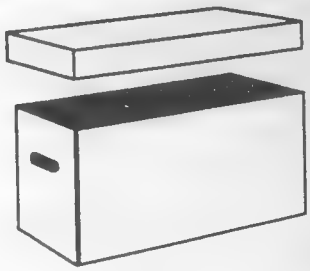

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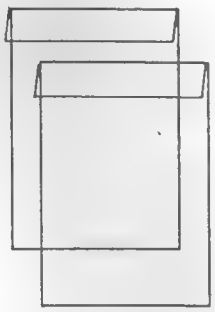

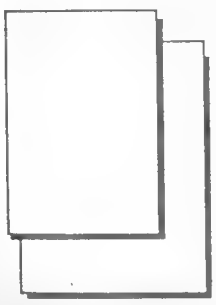

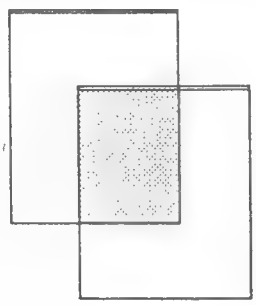

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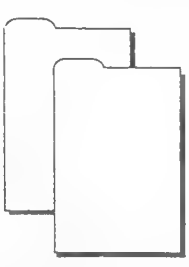

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Marvel editor-in-chief Tom DeFalco stated that there had been discussions but nothing was confirmed.

● Malibu Comics is in discussion with Dale Keown regarding a 1995 **Sludge/Pitt** crossover project.

A reason for being

A sad indictment of comic fans follows. Check out your price guides on **Jimmy Olsen** 88 and 89. Two 1965 second string Superman titles. But each issue has something special to commend it: one has a tribute to John F. Keneddy, the other has a one panel guest appearance by Legion of Super-Heroes support character Star Boy. Despite the fact they only came out a month apart, one is considered worth almost 20% more than the other. Out of respect for a comic's social awareness? No way. It's the one frame of Star Boy that makes #88 worth 75p more than #89 (in near mint, naturally).

Brainiac and Luthor guesting a month earlier in #87 make that issue a whopping £2.25 more valuable (over 50% up on poor old Kennedy).

As these are dealer averages, does an expression involving the words get and life spring to mind?

Here's another Price Guide slice-of-fanlife instance, then we'll change the subject. Wonder Woman: remember when they ditched the super-heroinne costume in the mid-1960s to have a jump-suited bell-bottomed Cathy Gale/Emma Peel image for Diana? OK, Mike Sekowsky took over and treated us to a hip version, complete with mentor I-Ching (get it?). Issue 196 was a beaut. The cover, anyway. Diana is manacled and spread-eagled with her back to us and head turned to face us. Her shirt is in tatters, there's a bullseye branded on her back, she's wearing very tight hotpants, and a guy with a phallic weapon is moving on stage. Wow, there's even a mini-skirted version of Diana in the top left hand corner and a top right slogan "Bigger & Better". A memorable cover, whatever your political stance. Price Guide description: *Origin and first appearance retold from All-Star Comics #8*. C'mon, Duncan, what about the hot pants, the bondage, the implied sex... All-Star #8?! Sheesh.

Missing centrefold?

Courtesy of mega-distributors Comag, **Penthouse Comix** is now available in UK newsagents. As a box-out. That means, want it or not, newsagents suddenly find (sale or return) copies in their deliveries. The July-August issue (date printed on the cover) turned up at the end of August — nice timing, guys it reached its sell-by date in three days — but with pages 82-86 ripped out for legal reasons (according to a cover sticker). What legal reasons? Who knows, but the offending pages are the preview of Milo Manara's latest work, which features some bizarre goings-on involving a woman, her bottom and a man with a tube.

But as this is an all-age magazine, if you want more details, you'll have get a US copy of **Penthouse Comix**.

So if you see **Penthouse Comix #2** on sale at marts, it may have had the cover disclaimer removed. So check that pages 82-86 are intact before buying!

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Rune #0 offer: we've been innundated with replies and had to order more copies from America. If you're still waiting, please be patient. (Dez)

Roger Langridge, Hackney
London E9

I noticed a request in your header to the letters page in the latest **Comics International** that your correspondents should "lighten up a little", with you adding the point, "If you don't like comics, why are you still reading them?" I'd like to respond, if I may.

I think you are always going to have this problem as long as the main editorial focus of your magazine is upon the superhero mainstream, which is almost without exception craftless, artless, intellectually insulting, and cynically exploitative in its marketing strategies. I do not write off superheroes altogether, as there are still a few jewels left in the tarnished crown — **Batman Adventures**, **Madman**, **The Power of Shazam** and **Flash** to name some recent examples. But these are definitely the exception.

I love comics, I love the medium, I love the format, I love the accessibility, the potential for communicating ideas, and I love many, many comics and newspaper strips for the degree of mastery of their craft that their writers and artists display.

Good comics are still around, but they exist almost exclusively outside the mainstream and are constantly being further marginalised by publications like yours. Why do you continue to give the oxygen of publicity to comics that will inevitably sell millions anyway, despite the bankruptcy of talent involved, purely because of clever marketing and a cynical appeal to adolescents' baser instincts, when there are far more worthy comics out there which are dying due to lack of sales — mainly because nobody knows they exist, partly due to stores refusing to stock them in adequate numbers, but partly because they tend to be glossed over and ignored by the fan press?

I noticed a review of Joe Sacco's **Palestine** in issue 45. Hurrah! This was a step in the right direction! More articles focusing on this end of the comic industry would be welcome. I'd like to read about my current favourites like Chris Ware's **Acme Novelty Library**, Dylan Horrock's **Pickle**, Sergio Aragonés' always wonderful **Groo**, Walt Kelly, some of the great British comics that slip through the net of **The Comics Journal**... use your imaginations.

I'll be frank, the current state of the mainstream sickens me. I find something tacitly unethical about the way it uses excessive gore and violence without the slightest hint of irony or humour, purely to elicit a visceral thrill in its large adolescent male, hormone-addled readership, and throw away traditional approaches (approaches that worked, largely because they were developed by more mature minds than those currently in charge) strike me as sad, misguided attempts to turn superhero comics into some kind of ersatz MTV experience, with a new thrill every five seconds and never mind the content.

But I still love comics, and read the good ones. And there are a *lot* of good ones.

*Like any paper, we attempt to report objectively on what's happening, with an emphasis on mass market events and no personal bias. Just as chain cinemas show few European movies, **Screen International** concentrates on Hollywood, etc, we cover the market as it is, not how we may want it to be.*

If we reflected your tastes, we would lose possibly 85% of our readers. We attract Marvel and Image fans by covering a lot of mainstream product (in an 85% superhero market, according to Diamond). But we also make readers aware of alternatives which we cover (proportionate to sales) alongside. Except reviews, this month 14 Marvels and 32 US indie reviews. Let's not be too elitist, Roger. (Dez Skinn/Editor)

Gary Ochiltree
Krpton Komics, London

The great and glorious Todd MacFarlane/**Spawn** debacle rumbles on apace. For those lucky fools who haven't followed this onrunning saga, Todd McFarlane explained that as he had spent so much of his schedule on producing the **Spawn/Batman** team-up, he fell behind on **Spawn** #19 & 20.

This meant that he would hit the 30 day returns deadline (the date by which a comic must ship in order to avoid becoming returnable) on **Spawn** #19 & 20. His solution was simple, cancel issues 19 and 20 and go straight to 21.

In a press release at the time it was stated Todd had partially completed 19 & 20, but wanted to go straight to 21 to "solve the returns problem and enable him to begin an exiting new story arc". What a load of crap.

Take a look at the August issue of **Diamond Previews**. **Spawn** 19 and 20 are both resolicited. The creative team is listed as Tom Orzechowski writing, with art by Greg Cappulo and Mark Pennington. So what happened to young Todd's partially finished issues? Todd hasn't given us an explanation about this, but judging by the number of porkies he's told about **Spawn** 19 & 20, perhaps they were published in the form of **Spawn** 21 & 22 with a view to avoiding returns in accordance with the direct market system, and incredibly, in the hope that no one would notice!!!! And could it be he's used the intended **Spawn Annual** material for #19 & 20?

The closing page of **Spawn/Batman** shows a close up of Spawn with a "batarang" deeply embedded in his face. The opening pages of **Spawn** 21 shows a close up of the corpse hero's face having just been stitched up (the exact same shape wound) following an encounter with a "Bozo in Black". These pages were clearly intended to follow each other. Surely it would have been better for him in the long run to admit that he was behind schedule, and to accept the returns. As it stands, Todd has shown a total disregard for the system that made him rich and the retailers whose continued support he needs. It will not surprise me if **Spawn** sales begin to fall. I for one will not be ordering more than the minimum to meet my standing order needs.

Why should I as a retailer continue to support McFarlane when he clearly has no intention of supporting me?

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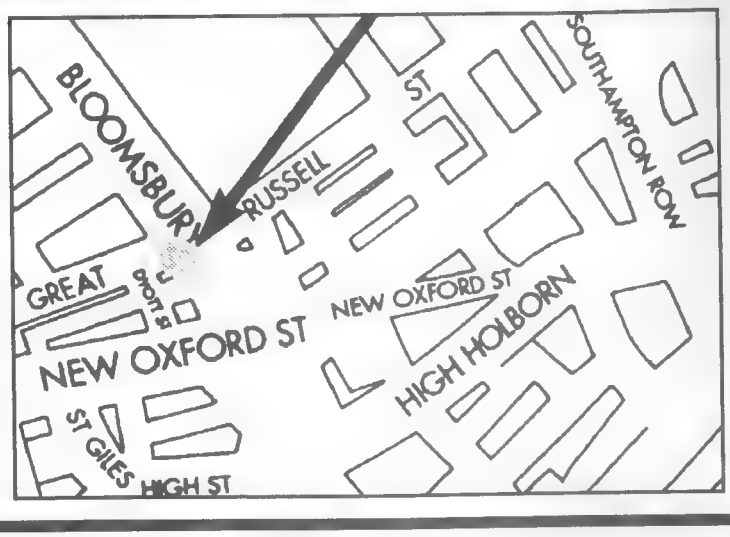

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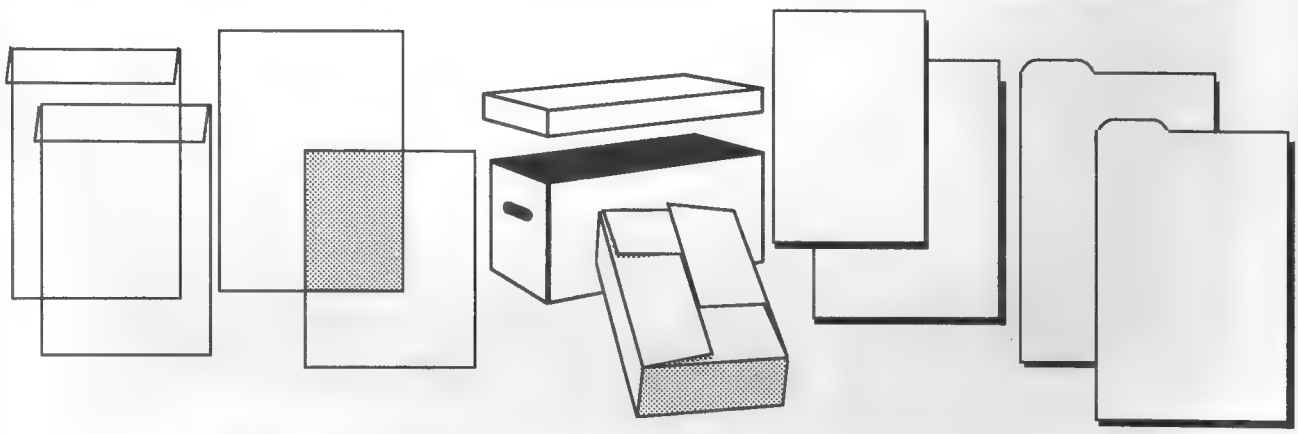

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Simpsons memorabilia for sale, inc: videos, trading cards, etc. SAE for details to: 61 Drake Close, Horsham, W. Sussex RH12 5UD.

For sale: 50 assorted, excellent condition, bagged comics. All within 5 years old maximum. I want £25 for the lot (excl p+p) Ring Colin for list 0480 497464 evenings only.

For sale private collection. **Spawn** 1 £4.95; **Punisher W.J.** 1 £4.95; **Wolverine** 1 £8.50; **X-Men** (new) 1 95p; **Hulk** 377 £3.95; **Green Lantern** (3rd) 1 £2; plus hundreds more Marvel and DC comics at low prices including **Spider-Man Daredevil, X-Men, X-Force, Infinity Gauntlet, Punisher, Hulk, Ghost Rider, Thor, Cap America, Iron Man, Deathlok, New Mutants, Cage, Batman, Superman, Green Lantern, Lobo, Flash**. Why pay dealers prices when you don't have to? Prices start from just 25p. For full price list send SAE to: S. Sewill, 10 Bellew Rd, Clubmoor, Liverpool L11 8NR.

Chase cards for sale: **Doomsday** S3 F2 £11 each; **Marvel Universe** series II: H1, H2, H3, H4 £8.50 each; **Simpsons** W1, W2, W3, W4, W6, W7, W9 £3.50 each; **Star Wars Galaxy** 6 card prism set £40; **WildC.A.T.s** 6 card prism set £25; **X-Men** (Fleer Ultra) 9-card subset £27, 6-card **Fatal Attractions** set £35, 6 card Blue/Gold team subset £40, 6 card Greatest Battles subset £40. Postage 30p per card (minimum £1.00). Send a stamp for full list, including sets and singles to K. Butters, 47 Grove Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 4AQ or telephone: 081 599 9306 for availability or orders.

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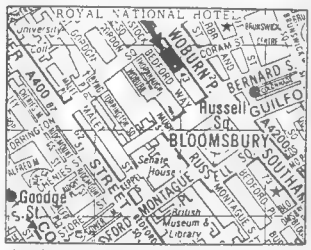

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WANTED

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Wanted: **Tom Puss Comics** (Birn Brothers) will pay £150, **Panda Comics** (Birn Brothers) £100, **Tom Puss in Rhymeland** £100, **Jack and Jill** all colour gift books (by Annette Mills) £40, write: Piet Koudenburg, Cortenhoeve 14, 2411 JM Bodegraven NL. The Netherlands.

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Wanted: any information on any *Hill Street Blues* spin-off series, such as *Beverley Hills Bunce* & *Chicago Blues*. Write to: Paula McOnie, 26 Oleander Crescent, Cherry Lodge, Northampton NN3 8QT

Wanted: issues 14 and 40 of **Grendel** (Comico). Also **Grendel** graphic novel **Devil by the Deed**. Back issues of **Grendel Tales** also required. Any condition considered. Call Susan on 081 552 1964 after 7.00pm weekdays, or any time at weekends.

Wanted: **Damage** 6; **Darkstars** 24; **Justice League Task Force** 16 (All **Zero Hour** tie-ins); **Guy Gardner** 18 and **Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Missing Martian** (Eternity Comics) 1-4. Prices paid negotiable (within reason) Contact: Peter Fitzgerald, 12b Prospero Road, Archway, London N19 3RF.

Wanted: Any Simpsons memorabilia, videos, comics, magazines, cards, etc. 61 Drake Close, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 5UD.

Wanted: The good, the bad and the ugly of all the below pocket size comics: **Battler Britton**; **Robin Hood**; **Dick Daring**; **Spy 13**; **Dogfight Dixon**; **John Steel**; **Kit Carson**; **Buck Jones**; or any cowboys or any told in pictures war; **Air Ace**; **Battle**. Your bounty will be my reward. Dave, 98 Blackpole Rd, Worcester WR4 9ST.

Wanted: **Pitt** 3; **WildC.A.T.s Yearbook** 1; **Spectre** 2, 3; **Hulk: Future Imperfect** 1 & 2; **Deadpool** (1st) 1-4; **Hulk** 404, 406, 415-417; **Green Lantern** 51-53; **Grendel** - comics preferably in sets. **Brute & Babe: It Begins, Monument** set. If you have any of the above please write to me with details. Comics also available for swapping: W. Tang, 22 Derry Avenue, North Road East, Plymouth PL4 6BH.

Wanted: Due to lack of space, would like to swap some of your Silver Age **Daredevil**, **Hulk**, DC comics + also **Hellblazer**'s for parts of my large collection of recent DC, Marvel and independent. Your details to Gary Cairns, 6 McLees Lane, Motherwell, Lanarkshire ML1 3NH. Tel: 0698 269981

Trading cards wanted: **Simpsons** Skybox series 1: 3, 6, 15, 16x2, 70x2 and R10. **Ren & Stimpy** prisms: 1, 34, 35x2, 36, 37x2, 40x2, 41x2, 42, 45, 47. Swaps or cash available. Contact A. Pick, 20 Grove Rd, Hoylake, Wirral, Merseyside L47 2DT or tel: 051 632 4640.

Wanted: **Beavis & Butt-Head** issues 3 & 4. Will pay £8 each. Tel: Jason 091 417 7756.

Wanted: 1st prints of **Superman** 75 newsstand, **Man of Steel** 18 and **Action Comics** 683. Honest prices paid. Matthew Gibbins, 224a Highfield Road, Farnworth, Bolton BL4 0NT or tel 0204 72415.

Wanted: **Judge Dredd** in an information magazine produced by The Office of Fair Trading. Also other obscure **Dredd/2000AD** character appearances. Name your price. Also generous exchanges possible. Can anyone recommend a good dealer in British comics? Contact: W Richards, 35 Ulfgar Road, Wolvercote, Oxford OX2 8BA.

Wanted: cheap **X-Men** and related, also swaps for same in exchange for **X-Men** and **X-Factor**, including many early issues. Write to Peter at 8 Court Lane Gardens, London SE21 7DZ.

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CoBRA

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CoBRA c/o COMICS INTERNATIONAL
8 Trinity Road, London N2 8JJ

The **CoBRA MOPS** agreement abides by the Advertising Standards Authority's Code of Mail Order Advertising Practice

eVENTS

An at-a-glance guide, this listing gives the dates and locations of all forthcoming events advertised this issue. A free service for advertisers, the bracketed number after each entry denotes the page this issue where the advertisement with full details appears.

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